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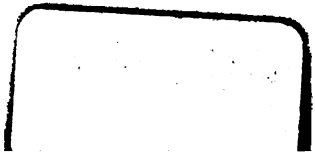
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JERNINGHAM.

JERNINGHAM:

A STORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Pourquoi craindrais-je de dire ce que je pense?"
NOUVELLE HELOÏSE.—ROUSSEAU.

VOL. II.

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BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

"And now 'twas done: on the lone shore were plighted
Their mutual vows."

BYRON.

THE time, evening: the place, a country hamlet on the banks of the gliding Thames, twenty miles or so from laborious London. Edward Jerningham, full of health and spirits, leaps from his boat on to the green sward, shoulders his rod and the basket of fish he has caught, and saunters homeward through the village—a most primitive little village that Fashion hath left behind. It is a puzzle to discover how

the inhabitants get their living, for every house is a shop, and visitors are few, and neighbouring gentry are scattered scantily. The circulating medium, gold, is rarely seen, and in minute quantities; our villagers live well-nigh without it. Thus, if Doctor Pip wants a cheese, he orders it, trusting that the grocer's wife will want the aid, ere long, of pills or "mixture as before;" and thus the debts are mutually balanced. So the haberdasher gets his meat, and the butcher his shirts, the fisherman his bread, and the baker his fish; and strange to say this division of labour and fruit seems to answer, though a political economist would declare it impossible. Little boys touch their hats with respect as Edward Jerningham passes, for he lives in the villa; and good fortune in literary matters, and some generosity on the part of Lord Haverdale, have made him a man of note there—so little money does so much at Greenlawn. As he turns the corner, beside the rude moss-grown old church, he meets Doctor Pip himself—a stout man, of florid complexion, who has a loud voice, and a wife who gets thinner every day and begets one young Pip at least every year. Pip knows everything about everybody, so he is an

amusing acquaintance to those who have no secrets to hide.

"Well! how *are* you?" roars Pip, in a voice that wakens up three or four dogs lying in the shade, and sets them barking. "Any sport?—damn the dogs, I'll write 'em a prescription. Just met Fribble the parson, ill from fasting; comes out like an old tallow-candle at the end of Lent. Thank you, Mrs. Pip is quite well—or at least as well as can be expected. This little stranger will make the ninth: children should be in number like a dinner-party—more than the Graces, and less than the Muses. Sir, I have overstepped the boundary."

"Quite sure?" said Jerningham.

"Fatally certain! Mrs. Pip's precision is proverbial, sir. This more or less welcome little stranger will make the ninth. Pity it's not the Squire's—called on him this morning; told me he couldn't eat his dinner: advised him to get up with the cock, go to bed with the crows, resort to the plough like Cincinnatus, and come to me in a fortnight; but instead of doing it, he will pay me another guinea to give him the same advice over again."

"Dine with me to-night?" said Jerning-

ham, who drew many sketches of life from Pip's discourse.

"Sorry I can't," replied Pip, and with truth, for Jerningham had some of Lord Haverdale's claret, to which Pip was tenderly attached—"obliged to meet the board of guardians. It is my intent to make a representation, sir. The worst paid man in the universe is a parish doctor. I go twenty miles every day, sir, for the parish; seven thousand three hundred miles a-year, for fifty pounds—three half-pence a mile! enough to make a man revolutionary!"

"Ah! ah! enough indeed!" said Jerningham.

"Good bye," exclaimed Doctor Pip, making a sudden dash—"good bye. Here comes that old maid, Miss Flutter—had five minutes of *her* already to-day; can't stand any more—three thousand years old, at least—resuscitated mummy, sir. Good bye!"

So the doctor, with a wry face, hurries away, and Jerningham saunters onward through the fields—evening, dangerous hour!—soothing him into tender dreamings as he wanders on; for who, as day melts into mellow twilight, can cast away all its influence? Sweet hour*

* Byron.

of rest, when Nature folds its ruggedness under a gauzy veil; when man forgets his wrongs and half forgives the wronger; when glad eyes wait your coming to some happy home, to flash with pleasure when you come; when you think of some old friend, who should have joined your board that night—how you would have drawn his wine from the oldest bottle in the choicest bin, until his heart became as great in love as yours, and his merry laugh rang like a horn through your rafters—but that he can come no more from that narrow bed where they have laid him, save called by other Voice than thine. These are thy mingled memories, O Evening! but not unblended with happier thoughts, as only a field or two distant from the cottage-door comes a ray of light from the blazing fire that seems to beckon you to your hearth; and then the house-dog barks at your well-known footstep, and the door is opened ere you reach it; and the cook, who was becoming tremulous and snappish, is reassured by the discovery that dinner will *not* be spoilt after all; and then, perhaps, as you step over the threshold a fairy figure meets you with *one* look of welcome that has so eloquent a meaning.

Her hand was in Jerningham's in an instant, the hand of Marie, so small and white, for all traces of toil had left it now; and then she takes his rod from him, and counts the fish, and gets his slippers, and makes him put on his dressing-gown, and he is seated by the fireside before he has time to say a syllable; though he snatches a kiss as a matter of course—there was time enough for *that;* but then Evening was to blame!

It was a charming cottage dwelling, this first *Home* of Edward Jerningham's. The country taste that was so innate in his disposition had cast over everything an air of gaiety, a rich choice of colour, that would have degenerated into vulgarity if the purer eye of the classic had not been there, as it was, to tone all down and mould it into beauty. There was in *his* mind almost too-absorbing an admiration of loveliness—too sensitive a shrinking from everything calculated to damp cheerfulness, or give a painful sensation, no matter how fleeting. Not a picture on the cottage walls but told of happy village scenes, of rustic merry-making, of streams that stole silently 'twixt mossy banks, where lovers whispered vows beneath the moonlight. No Rembrandt-

colouring, with figures wrapt in doleful shadow: no scenes of storms, with snapping branches, or waves convulsed in foam. All was Italian sunlight! Many a melancholy remembrance connected with the past would vanish from his brow as he sat beside his brilliant hearth after a day of labour, and looked around him. His residence was a fit type of youth! We *seem* to forget many things in this world, but the *first* of everything leaves its image upon our minds for ever.

Dinner passes; the claret sheds its lustre in Jerningham's glass; the filberts are near his hand, a fresh faggot on the fire, less for warmth than cheerfulness, for the evening is soft and clear; no caller to chat the time away, or break the tête-à-tête; and he and Marie sit alone together happily. She pretends—sly, little dissimulator—to be busy with some trifling work of 'broidery; but she is watching him all the time. The work is cast aside: she takes out her portfolio and pencils, and begins to sketch; but she is restless still. Then she hurries to the piano and wakes the notes; but they are too plaintive to please her fancy. And at last she sits down by Jerningham's

side again, closer however than before, and takes his hand—still without a word.

And so the minutes fly on, not in a silence that is embarrassing, but in a quietude that is perfect contentment; and as the claret ebbs, and the hand of the dial points to nine, Jerningham casts a glance at the shelf where lies the ever-increasing manuscript of the great work. It is the hour when his self-allotted task demands its sacrifice of time and intellect. She knows that look, and rises to arrange his desk; but at that instant the full lustre of the moon burst in upon them through the casement, made doubly bright by the reflection of the river flowing past their garden-gate: he arrested her hand, and drew her again beside him.

"The paper shall remain unblotted, Marie," said Jerningham; "no writing to-night. Stay with me!"

"Ah! yes!" she replied, so happy to remain. "You work too much; it makes you pale, Edward;" and she swept the curls from his forehead with her small white hand, in innocent freedom; "you are losing all your beautiful hair, too!"

"My Violet-eye is sad to-night."

"No! not sad," she answered; "only thoughtful. I have been thinking of all you have done for me—all you have *made* me; how you found me ignorant and poor, and left me what I am. There is nothing I know, that I do not owe to your kindness. How shall I repay all this?"

"You think too much of it, Marie," he replied. "Your abilities were great, but dormant; I only called them into life—a very small breath of gentleness sufficed. Oh! we shall see the Violet-eye a lady yet," he continued, smiling, "and married to wealth that can afford to give your beauty its due, and set the jewel in a worthy casket."

"Now you make me sad indeed," she said, almost in tears. "Could you ever ask me to leave *you?*—never!"

"Marie," replied Jerningham, in accents that had become unaccountably soft even to his own ear, "when I knew you first, and found your truth and worth—qualities that no wretchedness of circumstance could conceal—I thought in my own heart that it would be a goodly thing to lead you upward. As poverty yielded to independence, I strove to fulfil the

dream. I gave you masters, who taught the accomplishments you have been so quick to learn: I threw around you, as far as my means allowed, an atmosphere of refinement. With the arousing of your intellect came every day fresh graces of mind, and a nobler beauty even in your very countenance. I loved you—!"

Here she started, blushing, but with bliss upon her eyelids, and looked into his face.

"I loved you," repeated Jerningham, "as a sister."

Her features fell again, and she sank back sighing, with her hands clasped convulsively.

"I could do no more," he continued. "For *me* there is no future that another being should venture to partake: my livelihood ceases at the breath of a capricious man—vanishes at the touch of disease. No, Marie! as a sister I can be proud of your beauty, and, without fear, I can support your footsteps to a happy, and perhaps—who can tell?—to a lofty destiny: less attraction has won coronets ere now!"

"All this is mockery!" she exclaimed, with a sudden outburst of tempestuous passion—"mockery! and you know it! What destiny

remains for me when our separation would be my death-blow! Are you tired of your poor Violet?" and she sank on her knees beside him. "Oh! I have toiled so much and so thankfully to make myself worthy to be near you. I knew what my ignorance must be to a mind like yours, and I tried so hard to improve; and then when you praised me, ah! I was prouder than a queen. But no matter: I still owe you too much. I will obey you: I will go, if you will not let me be your servant, that I may see you as you pass by. Oh! Edward!" and she hid her face in her hands with shame at the avowal, "I love you so much!"

Not a sound to relieve the silence that followed that soft confession, nothing save the ripple of the gliding river or the murmur amid the branches of the fitful wind of evening time. But over all the moonlight, on the pale high countenance of Jerningham, on the declining face and rich dark hair of poor Marie, soothing into treacherous forgetfulness—prompting "deeds eternity cannot annul." She had often told him before that she loved him, but never with the same passionate accents. He knew the change that they spoke too

well; still he did not flee from the danger, for her sentiments were only too responsive to his own. His feigned coldness vanished: he raised her in his arms, and covered her cheek and eyes with burning kisses, and the poisoned chalice was quaffed. It was no longer a brother whom she pillowed to rest that night upon her happy but tumultuous bosom, nor she a sister that watched; but a lover and a loving woman together in the cottage beneath the moonlight!

CHAPTER II.

THE SOMNAMBULE.

"——Such stuff
As dreams are made of."

SHAKESPEARE.

GREVILLE the Wit, emancipated from editorial as well as legal chains, has been rejoicing for a space the noble loiterers at a country-house with the brilliancy of a conversational talent that advancing age could never quell. Greville the Wit has dined, drunk, joked, and returned to town; and now Greville the Author sits among his papers again, in the murky back office in the Strand, surrounded by literary hacks and printer's devils. The inexorable newspaper, like an unimpassioned destiny, advances its claims, and *will* conquer, though it kill. Michael Brent receives his

orders, and disappears; each particular imp is despatched to perform his allotted task in his peculiar Tartarus; and Greville settles himself down to the perusal of one or two unprinted paragraphs that remain behind. There seems nothing of note; but anything will do for the next number. It is the season of gigantic gooseberries; wonderful births in Norfolk, of four children at a time, who are all doing well; boa-constrictors found in the London Docks; the sea-serpent seen in the Pacific by an American whaler; the north-west passage found; the philosopher's stone discovered in Germany—in fact, it is the time when Parliament is *not* sitting, and when newspapers live on their wits, *comme il plait Dieu.* Greville throws the marvels aside one by one, with an indifference that would be surprising, if it were not that he has read them all, with little variation, any winter these twenty years. But, at last, *one* attracts his attention; he marks it for insertion, and is pondering over its contents when a card is brought him, and the Baroness Flamingo follows it into the sanctum.

"I saw Alvanley's chariot at the door," she said, with her irresistible frankness and grace;

"and as the rumble was covered with game, I knew you had just arrived from ——shire."

"You mistook your *métier* in writing novels, Baroness," replied Greville; "your talent is analytical."

"Well, I knew you would quiz me," she replied, laughing, "but I determined to take your dignity by storm, nevertheless; so now tell me all the news. The only two people left in town should be very civil to one another."

Readier to respond to so agreeable a challenge than to resume that work which, it must be confessed, our editor never failed, if possible, to postpone until to-morrow, he plunges with her into the current history of fashionable people and things; and their sparkling converse is a curious contrast to the dingy, ink-stained office in which they sit. It is like a display of fireworks in a coal-pit. At length, as other topics are disposed of, the paragraph is mentioned—"The new Somnambule."

"A novelty!" exclaims the Baroness; "charming! Come, let us go together."

"The novelty will be nothing *new*," said Greville, "depend upon it. Novelties now are *never* new, any more than London new-laid

eggs are ever fresh. I went to see a wonderful creature the other day—lost link between the monkey tribe and man. What do you think it turned out? A pet monkey, escaped from Baker-street."

"Perhaps this time we may make a '*bonne fortune;*' I feel that my lucky star is predominant. *Allons!*"

Greville despatched the chariot in attendance; and, handing the Baroness into her own carriage, he entered, and they drove away.

The house they sought lay some distance from Fleet-street and the Strand—that region loved of Doctor Johnson and all good citizens. And why not worthy of reverence? For, *thence* to where once stood the village of Charing, shall the beholder see more human variety than any other spot in the world can show. All pass and repass there—the rich and the poor; the prince and the peasant; the merchant and the mendicant; the author, pale of feature; the soldier, swart, and muscular in limb; the artist, with moustache and open shirt, in picturesque effect; the lord, with embarrassed lands, who knows his son will be a beggar; the commoner, whose wealth is to make his son a lord. And every hour of the

twenty-four doth the aspect change. From early morn, when heavy carts roll along the thoroughfare, bringing country fruits and genial flowers; from the hour, still early, when the sun rises above the house-tops, and lamps are put out; from the time when shops open, and clerks hurry to their desks; from mid-day, when the uproar of life hath awakened Fashion with its brawling; from evening, when the counting-house is closed, and the merchant presseth homeward, and the lamps shed forth once more their dreamy light, and theatres expand their portals, and every square is gay, and every hearth an altar where *some* hearts cast off care and determine to hope on —to night, secret night, with its spectacles of mingled splendour, wretchedness, and vice; its innocent wanderers who are houseless; its haunters like that female figure sitting on the door-step now, dreaming of youth and a happy home amid green fields, stained by recollection too much to allow of returning thither: from morn to night, thus the phases change; and the moralist may gather wisdom from Fleet-street, as "the weasel sucks eggs."

But, leaving it behind, they rattled along over the stones; and the carriage drew up at

a tall, dark house, not far from Oxford-street. Several other equipages were in attendance; some foot-passengers, too, occasionally entered, but not without a glance around, as if they were either apprehensive of unhallowed ground, or ashamed of ridicule for entertaining some new chimera.

Too well known in fame and established in society, each in a particular phase, to care for *opinion*, Greville and the Baroness alighted, and sought the apartment of reception. It was a large room, hung with massive crimson drapery, and illumined dimly with lamps. At one end was a raised daïs, rather than stage, upon which stood, in advance, a single easy chair. Seats for the spectators occupied the space in front of the platform; and at intervals soft strains, as of distant music, floated round, but vaguely, and in tones that touched the soul rather than the ear. Beyond this simple harmony, which might be intended to mellow, as it were, the mind into a fit forgetfulness of things without, to render it susceptible of new impressions, there was nothing that appealed to the imagination whatever. It was evidently not by clap-trap, affecting the grosser senses, that the audience was to be subdued.

Before the first novelty of the scene had subsided sufficiently to allow Greville and the Baroness to speak beyond a whisper, the doors were closed, the music ceased, and a tall, pale man, of foreign aspect, advanced, and addressed the audience. In a low, musical voice, he gave a slight sketch of the science he professed, referring its origin to the most ancient times—indeed, to the very principle of life, and the relation that must of necessity exist between mind and matter. He showed how, in dreams and trances, the soul asserted its independence of the body, and proclaimed its immortality. He alluded to magic, as practised by the early seers; to the powers, apparently of an unearthly nature, but really referable to the human will, which were possessed by the olden soothsayers who foretold the future, and by those who, like the hag of Endor, could command the dead. In the progress of science, he declared that much of the knowledge called occult must inevitably be regained. At many and late intervals in the world's history, it had struggled to the light; but, owing to the imperfect glimpse attained, or the intolerance and persecution of mankind, it had never ripened into a form that enabled it to

assert itself. That a power, however, *did* exist, by which time and distance were annihilated, to which the past was present, and the future might be made near, he confidently proclaimed. At the same time, many influences, which he confessed he could not always trace, would combine on frequent occasions to produce defeat. To promise success was impossible. He could only use the means that had succeeded before, and would succeed again, but for some mental condition of the patient not to be known or neutralized, some momentary bent that was stronger than his power or his will.

He bowed. The curtain fell; and the soft strains of music, wild and tuneless, pervaded the apartment, which his words, though so apparently frank and unreserved, already appeared to fill with an undefined sense of mystery.

At this juncture, Jerningham, armed with a "press-order," entered the apartment, and leaned against the wall silently, without observing Greville or the Baroness.

The curtain rose again, and the exhibitor advanced, leading forward a young girl attired in white, whose tremulous features, dreamy,

and devoid of colour, betokened a high degree of mental susceptibility. He caused her to address the audience, to show that her senses were still at perfect command; and she then sat down, of her own accord, in the chair, before the assemblage. The exhibitor fixed his dark, piercing eye upon hers, made two or three undulatory motions with his hands before her countenance, and her lids grew fixed, though the orbs were open, while her arms and limbs sank into a listless and inert prostration. During these movements, he had retained her hand: he now released it, declaring that she was in the required state of half-suspended function, and that questions not propounded idly, but in good faith, she was now in a condition to answer.

Jerningham stood forward, with a motion to be heard. The magician eyed him with a look in which interest struggled with the tone of sadness that appeared habitual to him.

"And what can *you* seek to learn?" said the strange being before him. "To *your* youth, life must have no present but that of pleasure, no future but one of hope."

"Then other youth differs from *mine!*" re-

plied Jerningham; but tell me, where is the writer of that letter?"

He handed a missive of Lord Haverdale to the operator, who placed it in the hands of the somnambule. After she had passed her hands over it once or twice, he put to her again the question that had been asked. A troubled look of searching out some object succeeded, and she spoke:

"I see a large oaken chamber, and a man stretched upon a couch. He is ill; but *she* soothes him—a woman of gentle yet lofty mien. There is some dangerous shadow over him, yet he will overcome it. He speaks now of—of—"

"Whom?"

"Of—Edward Jerningham!" she added, in a lower tone; and her form sank back, as if exhausted."

The operator waved Jerningham back, and allowed no further importunity. "She has lost the train of thought," he said: "let her repose."

The mention of his name called the attention of Greville and the Baroness to Jerningham, who sat down perplexed beside them, as soon as he caught a glimpse of their figures.

The former cut off a lock of his half-silvered hair, and handed it forward. "The future?" he asked, laconically.

"Misery and want; but a funeral-pall borne by the noble!"

"And mine?" said the Baroness, sending a diamond bracelet to the ordeal, that contained a portion of one of her chestnut tresses.

"Death in a foreign capital, and by your own hand!" was the reply.

A general movement of horror swayed the auditory as these thrilling replies vibrated through the apartment. One or two of the more sensitive sex displayed the fear they could not conceal, in an evident disposition to faint; while even the sterner portion of the audience strove in vain to smile away contemptuously the hold which the exhibition had taken upon their minds or imaginations.

The pause that followed, however, was not of long duration. A female stepped forward towards the daïs. She was closely veiled; but a dark eastern eye gleamed through the slight screen of gauze that hid her countenance; and though her confirmed, undaunted air at first seemed almost masculine, a second glance re-

solved the character of her mien into more of dignity and pride. She took from her bosom a small golden amulet, of strange manufacture, surmounted with a coronet richly wrought. Some writing was emblazoned on it, in minute letters which belonged to a foreign tongue.

"Behold a relic of the lost!" said the female, in a rich, melodious voice, which did not tremble, though all her soul was in the words—"the first gift to her child, from a mother who knew something of the unguessed, secret world of things, but has failed in this. Can the art you profess follow her destiny? Where is she now?"

The somnambule gave signs of fatigue at the new trial imposed, as the operator placed the relic in her hand, and willed her powers to the task. After a slight restlessness, however, the influence predominated; and she proceeded, as before, to shift the connecting link within her hands, while her eyes strained forward with evident pain, as if pursuing a troubled and perplexing labyrinth.

Several times the somnambule muttered indistinctly, and then again subsided into silence, as if the train were obscured. The auditors

were hushed in breathless expectation; and the female interlocutor stood in suspense that neither spoke nor stirred.

"A river gliding 'mid overhanging branches silently," said at last the strange being before them, "past a cottage-lawn, where sits a fair girl, young in years, and beautiful."

"She lives!" exclaimed the female, drawing her veil aside in her deep emotion, and exhibiting a noble countenance, dark as night, but sorrow-seared. "The scene—is it in England? Where?"

"Yes, in England; nor far hence. An old church opposite, with ivied tower; a boat at the garden-gate; fishermen in the stream. She speaks."

"Of what?" cried the woman, with thickening utterance.

"Of one whose portrait she takes from her bosom—a youth whom she looks on fondly, and calls—her lover."

"Lover!" sighed the woman, in tones of anguish—"another victim in the trammels of Man! But she lives: she may yet be saved."

She snatched the amulet from the operator's hand, and hastened away, her eye lit with the fire of madness.

Edward Jerningham remained riveted to the spot with strange and conflicting emotions. What well-known scene had the somnambule recalled to his memory? And what mysterious being was she who stood by his side but now, and had stood there once before, when she confronted Lord Haverdale in the Forest of Jerningham?

NOTE.—THE SOMNAMBULE'S PROPHECY.
(See End of the Book.)

CHAPTER III.

THERE were not, as already intimated, many lordly potentates in the vicinity of Greenlawn, where Jerningham had fixed his abode; but amongst the illustrious unknown, the Triton of the rustic minnows was the parson. The Reverend Mr. Fribble had the largest house, the finest servants in the gaudiest livery, the richest wife, and the haughtiest children, that could possibly be arrayed to overawe a subservient peasantry. When the Fribble himself, or the Fribble's stuck-up better-half, or the Fribble's overbearing daughters, devised a law, every one cringed thereto; and few even ventured to grumble. The Reverend Fribble's sermons all told the poor how much they were indebted to the rich for noticing them, and how thankful they ought to be that purple, descending to velveteen, could undertake to arrange the affairs of the lowly. From *his* mouth was never breathed the lesson of the rich man

passing to heavenly things being more difficult than the passage of the camel through the needle's eye; he could only preach that servants should obey their masters, and to *him* Greenlawn was one entire servant, *for he was rich!*

Of course the Fribble was an upstart; the Fribbles always are. A sneak at school; a sizar at college, where he crawled before the noble who might become patrons, and assist his future career; next stage a school-usher, always fishing for invitations on Saturday afternoons, when the mutton was cold, or the pie made up of ignoble and unsavoury weekly scraps; and then a private tutor in the house of a good-humoured defunct old knight, whose widow turning saintly, betook herself to green tea and confession, and turned her house into a nunnery, and in fear and trembling gave him her daughter in marriage, to absolve herself under the shadow of his sanctity from the possible commission of some one of the cardinal sins; in every phase the Fribble had kept his eye on the main chance; in every cast of the dice he had been successful. Boldness and independence are ill-arrayed in the struggle upwards with the mean and the sordid.

To this sleek and reverend personage, how-

ever, life was not a land flowing *all* with milk and honey. In an evil hour he decided that the Doctor, even Pip, was not of the same choice porcelain as himself, but, being of lowlier clay, must be omitted from his tea-and-sandwich evening parties. This was the sole mistake of his life. Not that the Doctor cared—not a whit; his voice was as loud, his cheek as ruddy as ever. But Mrs. Pip never forgave it; and from that moment, with all the craft of womanhood, she proceeded to goad the Doctor to revenge. When he came in late, or wet or worn, or dull with the megrimes, or exclaiming against a lame horse, or, in fact, in any state of irritation, she never failed to present the Parson to his maledictory mood, until at length, as she said, Pip saw Fribble in his true light, and hated him to her heart's content. And his anger once aroused, Pip was always at it. He beat his wife hollow in animosity, for he was one of those people to whom the mere act of talking was a pleasure: he had, what was called at the Free-and-Easy Society he frequented, a "fine flow of words;" but what is vulgarly designated, "the gift of the gab." And now wherever Fribble was, there was Pip also. At the Board of Guardians, Fribble proposed a

subscription for blankets: Pip proposed bread. "What was the use of warming the poor externally," he said, and "causing them to eliminate perspiration, superinducing lassitude, and relaxing the fibres and muscles, when the organs of the stomach were already flaccid and destitute of natural power, owing to the absence of alimentary nourishment?" Doctor Pip wanted to know *that!* And as the farmers who constituted the chief portion of the Board didn't understand these abstruse terms, they wanted to know too, and so at last bread was substituted for blankets. Then at the Poor-Law Committee, Fribble proposed flannel-jackets for the charity-children. The motion was nearly carried, and the Parson thought for once he should pass his measure unnoticed, when Pip rushed in breathless, and insisted upon being heard. What was to be the price of the flannel-jackets? and did that price allow of their having *collars?* Fribble was compelled to acknowledge that the jackets had *not* been projected with collars. *Then*, regretting as Pip always did to oppose the reverend gentleman in the chair, Pip must oppose the motion as it then stood, and suggest that the words "*with collars*" be introduced. He need scarcely

point out that the humidity of our climate was inducive of bronchitis in every form; that ordinary cold was frequent; that catarrh was common; that uvulas were relaxed; that miseries, too numerous to be mentioned, arose from the want of flannel round the throat; and Pip as a man—as a Christian, &c., &c., *must* suggest that the words "with collars" be added as a rider to the motion in question, and he would then give it his hearty and cordial assent. This parliamentary form of address tickled the farmers; the amendment was carried; the charity-children had collars to their flannel jackets; and Fribble, discomfited, regretted more than ever he had not asked Pip to tea at first.

The Parson, however, though wary in the choice of his visitors, was by no means particular into whose house he intruded, under his clerical licence: there was no Pariah into whose cabin the Jesuit did not pry. In spite of Doctor Pip, most of the poor were under his thumb; the rich never or seldom spurned the yoke. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that when Jerningham, liberal and gifted, came to dwell in the cottage by the river-side, all the Parson's cunning was on the alert.

The fame of the author rendered caution necessary in approaching one who might become a dangerous enemy, and cause dissension in the flock; yet Fribble yearned for domination. Who was this mere boy, who showed no signs of bending, but passed the lordly priest as if he were a mere ordinary being? Who was his housekeeper, or sister, or companion, whichever she might be, with her pensive beauty, and violet eyes, so soft and yet so lofty that they never quailed even beneath his searching gaze? Fribble determined to know *all*. But here again Pip was beforehand with him. The character of the Parson had often given them food for merriment; and the Doctor, divining from Fribble's inquiries the intended inroad, forewarned the prey. Whenever the Parson called, Jerningham was excused on one or other plea, until shame prevented his further intrusion. This unwillingness, however, to receive him only confirmed his priestly doubts; and henceforth Jerningham and Marie were joined with Pip almost insensibly in a general bond of union against the Parson, and the Parson against them; and which is to get the best of it must be seen hereafter. But it did not add to Jerningham's happiness in the meantime.

The greater the mind, the more sensitive it generally is to the smaller frettings of life.

As yet, however, these shadows are few and fleeting; the lovers are happy in their new tie; and many drops must fall upon the marble before its surface betrays the induration. For the present they think of nothing but each other. They are so young, so full of life, so formed to enjoy its glorious possession, that they scarcely notice from week to week how the minutes glide by, each with its deeds and thoughts stamped in everlasting record. To Marie *all* was happiness; and if at distant intervals a shade of care rested on the pale brow of the author, it arose from a cause very different to the malignity of the village priest. Such anxiety pointed to the future—that inevitable goal to which all things hasten. He could not regard the growing loveliness of Marie without a pang of solicitude, respecting the responsibility he had undertaken in thus linking her fate with his. He knew that he should have fled from the danger when he detected the first evidences of friendship overstepped, and a fatal region intruded upon. But although the temptation had been too powerful to resist, and love had proclaimed

the victory, the battle had not been ignobly fought, nor were the vanquished without honour in their defeat. The false step once taken, Jerningham determined, almost tearfully, that no further shame should follow. He knew that she was too innocent and too loving to feel any disgrace in her attachment; her *mind* was still pure, and he resolved that no work of his should ever degrade it. Upon an intellect so full of grace, and so impressionable, all things left their passing trace. To mould this mind; to lead it into unexplored regions of knowledge; to shed upon it all the majestic light that science, art, music, and poetry have accumulated from the wealth of ages past, was now the aim to accomplish which Jerningham strained all the fertile resources of his genius and his wit. He filled their cottage by the river-side with everything that could improve and refine its beautiful dweller. The bust of the statesman on the pedestal, the pictures on the walls, the books and maps in his study, all formed subjects regarding which he would delight to awaken her curiosity; and thus day by day the new light dawned—the love of knowledge. With the uprising of the intellectual powers came a loftier character upon her pen-

sive countenance; and her beauty was rendered dazzling and perfect now that it was illuminated by the rays of the soul.

No wonder that with such a magnet to attract the young and gay, Jerningham's house was often filled with guests. Exquisitely sensitive to pleasure, but most of all to that of society, the young companions extended their hospitality to all whom Jerningham had known in less prosperous times. Greville brought thither the unrivalled conversation for which peeresses might sigh in vain; Revel, the actor, came often with proposals for another farce, and the superlative mimicry that had established him upon the stage in favour and competence; and amidst many more, there was never wanting Doctor Pip, who always contrived to excite the curiosity of the Parson, by letting drop a casual remark that he was going to dine at the Villa, to meet Mr. Jerningham and his charming housekeeper, with many other notabilities from town.

"Indeed, Sir!" Pip would add, "indeed, Mr. Fribble! most agreeable society at Greenlawn! Sorry I don't meet *you* at the Villa. Quite enlivens the parish-doctor; helps me through the seven thousand miles I ride, walk,

or run every year, for fifty pounds! Board to-night, Sir! Coffee for the Union is the question *on*—how about chicory? I shall run over for five minutes after the claret, to move an amendment!"

Torture this to the Reverend Mr. Fribble. Tea and sandwiches floated through his mind, but it was too late.

Amidst these reflections and amusements, however incidental to leisure, it was not without labour that Jerningham made up his existence. He was one of those who toiled and spun—an intellectual delver, who knew no pause. Step by step the new work had progressed through many a weary day, when rain and storm had shaken their cottage-home, through the still watches of many a long silent night, when nothing broke the hushed repose but the cry of the owl, or the flapping of the ominous bat against the shutters. But it was finished now. Piled up on the table a massive manuscript, Greville pores over a page here and there, as they sit by the fireside, and betrays approval.

"This book will create a sensation, if it be not a success," said the critic; "its chief cleverness is its universality: one chapter is lively enough for the gayest; another is

thoughtful enough for the more profound; while a third has something that should attract a class totally distinct from either. But books which *pay* are written for particular classes; to flatter particular prejudices; to tickle the vanity of a sect; to pamper the predominant pride of a community. You have been superior to this—you have truckled to no vice, and sold yourself to no power; but in aiming at generality, may you not miss the mark? No single book ever pleased everybody. The King remarked to Lord —— the other day, 'People talk a great deal about Shakespere; but what a deal of nonsense he wrote!'* so much for universality!"

"I do not seek gain by this work," said Jerningham, in reply to Greville's criticism; "I never expected it to be popular. Indifference and oblivion for it, though a cherished child, will not break my heart. I shall love it then as the mother loves the deformed offspring. Its reception by the public is rather a matter of *curiosity* to me than otherwise."

"I am curious, too," added Greville; "we

* A literal observation of George the Third.

will publish it forthwith: it is not often that new principles are so clearly enounced, or old truths so boldly spoken. But what are Revel and the violet-eye concocting so quietly in the corner, over their nuts?"

"A new play for Jerningham to write, for me to bring out," said Revel, "and—"

"For *me* to act the principal part," cried Marie, clapping her hands with pleasure; "I have been practising already."

"She would make a glorious actress!" exclaimed Revel with enthusiasm.

"She would make a very pretty one!" said the more wary Greville.

"Ah! now you all make me blush!" laughed Marie, sinking back in her chair modestly, and hiding her face in her hands.

A knock at the door! Who comes so late to the cottage? Doctor Pip's servant, with a summons to leave the comfortable fireside on parish business? No! a letter from Lord Haverdale, stating that he is ill, and calling on Jerningham to join him at Paris.

"*Diable!*" exclaimed Greville, when he heard it: "the somnambule's prophecy! Is *my* fate to follow as soon?"

CHAPTER IV.

MARIE had been too well accustomed to Jerningham's sudden absences to feel any unusual apprehension at his hasty departure; and as any whim of Lord Haverdale's was ever executed without regard to money, our author-hero was conveyed to Paris with a speed that *then* seemed marvellous. In three days (!) his post-chaise drew up at the hotel of his titled guardian in the Faubourg St. Germain. He found Lord Haverdale recovering his health; but still languid from the effects of a disease which appeared rather to have been the offspring of a restless mind than of a wounded frame. Reclining in a luxurious *fauteuil*, his head supported upon a crimson pillow, which brought into vivid contrast the pale chiselled features and lofty brow, and watched now, as ever, by the untiring devotion of Madame de Méranie, it seemed to Jerningham that human pride had there effected its consummation.

So haughty the spirit that breathed in every curl and quiver of that determined lip, so massive the unwrinkled brow, so coldly clear the eye (as incapable of fear as apparently it was of any other weakness), it appeared that pride, superior even to death, and sublimely unconquerable by any earthly pang. When Jerningham entered the apartment he welcomed him in his usual tranquil immobility of manner; but did not give any particular reason for calling him to Paris. The news of everything passing in London seemed to interest him more than formerly. He talked of returning to England.

"Strange as it may appear, I have actually no *home* in England," he said, "or I think I should return at once; this place fevers me too much after the disappointments of last year."

"I will look out for some place suitable to your Lordship," replied Jerningham, who now began to understand how much the failure of Paul Didier and his plans had galled the haughty noble.

"I have been busy myself," continued Lord Haverdale; "my agents propose on the average about a dozen a day—in fact, all sorts

of heavy impossibilities. We will talk of this hereafter; meantime my fellow Stocks will tell you the number of my Opera-box, and the horse that is at your disposal: make your stay agreeable!"

Lord Haverdale fixed his eye upon Jerningham while he was making his acknowledgments, as if he was about to add more; but at that instant the door opened, and an officer of noble mien, and covered with decorations, was ushered into the apartment.

"A few moments in private, milord!" he exclaimed in agitated accents.

"Cher Baron, proceed; this is my protegé, Mr. Jerningham—Monsieur le Baron de St. Clair."

The introduction was acknowledged on both sides by a bow, and Madame de Méranie left the apartment.

"More sorrow for unhappy France!" exclaimed the Baron, when they were alone.

"Explain, *mon ami!*" said Haverdale, beginning to rouse himself from his lethargy.

"I was walking to your hotel," continued the Baron, "when a peasant fellow accosted me in the Tuileries Gardens, and implored me to let him reveal a dreadful secret. Thinking

it the mere trick of a mendicant, I was about to strike him with my cane, and pass on; but before I could do this he had begun the revelation. Figure to yourself my horror at the tale which begins with assassination. Fearing that some one might overhear the confession in which I was taking part, I told him to follow me here."

"He is in the hotel?" asked Haverdale, rousing more and more.

"He is, milord; you will excuse—"

"Mr. Jerningham will fetch him," interrupted his Lordship, "and prevent his meeting the servants; the fellow may be familiar with some of them."

The man, no less agitated than the Baron himself, was soon found and locked in the room.

"Repeat your tale!" said the Baron de St. Clair. "On the word of a man of honour you are among friends."

"I will believe it," replied the man; "but when you know all, do not despise one of whom Fortune has made a plaything, but who is guiltless of any crime."

"Proceed!" said Haverdale.

"I am Jean Louis Brinck," continued the

man. "My father, Monsieur le Baron, served in the army under the same banner as yourself, and is now gone to his eternal rest; hence it was that I made you the possessor of this terrible secret. You are loyal and brave; you will avert the projected villany of the assassins."

"The victim?" said the Baron.

"Is the Duc de Berri," answered the man in accents of emotion. "The poignard is already sharpened whose sheath will, ere long, be one of the noblest bosoms in France."

"Why do you not confide this to the police?" asked Haverdale, warily.

"Because within twelve hours I should be a dead man," he replied. "Listen! Some months ago I entered the service of the Vicomte de ——, and soon gained his entire confidence. One night he came in late, his dress disarranged, his manner disturbed; and as I assisted at his toilet he said to me 'Jean! Jean! thou art a good youth; would'st thou not do *any* deed to serve me?' 'Aye, monseigneur!' I replied. 'And dost thou not hope to be rich some day, Jean?' 'I hope, monseigneur, to provide bread and a little wine for my old age,' was my answer. 'Jean!'

he continued, 'thou may'st become rich without labour by the work of a moment. Do my bidding, and with a hundred-and-fifty thousand francs thou shalt go to thine own country; or, if you love the Netherlands no longer, then make thine home in bright-skied Italy, with its grapes and flowers and sunshine.' 'What would monseigneur?' I asked falteringly, for the thought of the money made me tremble. He searched in a drawer: I thought it was for the reward; but, instead, he suddenly drew forth a pistol and presented it at my head. 'Swear!' he exclaimed, 'by that holy relic to do what I shall bid,' and he pointed to the *agnus Dei* beside his bed; 'swear! and the hundred-and-fifty thousand francs are thine.' 'Monseigneur!' I implored, 'spare me!' 'Refuse and die!' he exclaimed. 'Take this dagger; when you return it, the stain it bears must be the blood of the Duc de Berri! Now thou know'st the secret; and fifty avengers will be on thy track hourly until it is fulfilled, to strike thee down if thou art false. Breathe but a syllable of it, and thou hast dug thine own grave.'"

"You took the oath?" said the Baron de

St. Clair; "it was natural—to save your life!"

"Most noble chevalier," answered Jean Louis, who had been deeply moved during his agonizing recital, "when my father, good old man! was on the bed of death, he told me that he too had been offered, and had refused the wages of dishonour. He made me promise, standing beside him then, that if unscrupulous ambition crossed my path and offered me gold for blood, I would think upon that sacred hour of parting, and spurn the ill-bought wealth as he had done."

"You shall not repent!" said Lord Haverdale.

"I took the oath to save my life," continued Jean Louis; "I betray the secret to save my honour. The voice of my dying father haunted me until I spoke; now the load is removed, his spirit will rest in peace."

"Who is the principal author of this plot?" asked the Baron. "Have you unravelled all the threads of the web?"

"Not *all*," replied Jean Louis; "but I know that the chief mover who will profit by the blow is a member of the Royal family!"

"*Dieu!*" exclaimed Haverdale in undertones. He was quite aroused now: his strength returned, his eye lit with its olden fire.

"What do you propose?" said the Baron de St. Clair, after a pause, during which all the auditors had been agitated with violent and conflicting emotions.

"I will wait until the plot is ripened, to keep you advised of all," said Jean Louis; "and then, when the life of the Duc de Berri is saved, to *you* I trust myself for a safe conduct out of France; not a step of that path but will teem with danger and death!"

"All this you may rely upon," said the Baron; "I called, on the way hither, on one of the Prince's aides-de-camp to recommend caution, so that no danger can menace him yet."

"Danger is on every hand," said Jean Louis, "until we know who are friends and who are foes: I tremble even now at your last avowal. Should the person to whom you have spoken be in the plot, our lives are lost."

"Fear not!" exclaimed the Baron; "you have as gage for your safety the unsullied honour of your father's commander, the Colonel de St. Clair."

"Then ere long we meet again," said Jean Louis; "adieu!"

"Stay!" added Haverdale, opening a side-door, "here is a private staircase; this will lead you into a side street, whence you can depart without remark."

As he disappeared, there was a summons at the principal entrance, a heavy footstep on the oaken landing, and at Haverdale's request Jerningham opened the door.

A huissier entered, and approached the Baron.

"Monsieur le Baron de St. Clair, I believe," said the huissier, uncovering.

The Baron inclined his head. The huissier gave him a paper.

"An order, monsieur, to arrest wherever he may be found the Baron de St. Clair, on the charge of wearing under false titles the decorations of the orders of Saint George's, Saint Anne, Vladimir, and of the military merit of Prussia."

"Already on the track!" muttered the Baron, as he delivered his sword to the huissier.

"The plot thickens!" exclaimed Lord Haverdale when they were gone. He was almost *well* now!

CHAPTER V.

MARIE'S LETTER.

"How shall I write to you, my beloved? I have told you of my affection so often, that it seems useless to repeat it now; yet, in absence, your words come to me like your voice; and I have nothing worthy of you—nothing but my poor love—to offer in return for your kindness. I sit here alone, in our river-side cottage, where everything speaks to me of *you*, and recall the hours we have spent together, the spots where we have lingered during the twilight spell of many an evening-time. Happy recollections all! In *our* sky there has been no cloud. The blank, dreary past before we met appears unreal as a dream. I know no world but a happy one. Yet, sometimes, this very happiness makes me tremble: as the poet tells, whom you taught me to venerate, 'the brightest trees throw sternest shade;" and if

the winter must indeed follow on summer's footsteps, if on our happy, golden hours a gloomy shadow should one day dawn, the tempest would fall with double anger on the creatures of the sunshine. My own Edward, I am sad for a moment. Our old enemy, the lordly parson, met me to-day, and spoke of *you*, and questioned me haughtily. Somehow, my courage failed me—I shrunk, for the first time, before his gaze; and when I reached home, I flung myself into your old arm-chair, and wept. I knew not that it was a crime to love!

"This has made me pensive. I have thought that if by any talent I could render myself independent of the world, none then dare question me, and my heart might bestow its fondness where it willed. To gain this end, *any* task would appear light: but the one I have adopted is a labour of love. Revel has come often, of late, to instruct me. He declares me apt, and progressing. When you return, my own Edward, you will not scold me for this? In the mimic life of the stage, I seem to feel the realization of my destiny. It is not right, it is not just, that I should consent to be always an idle retainer of your bounty. You have talked to me of so many

lofty aspirations, that the ambition of *your* mind at length has entered mine.

"When will you return? All things melt into nothing, when compared with *that!* Oh, surely the love that makes me so happy only in thought can have no stain of wrong! Its possession makes me better and wiser; and I have felt in it something even *holy*, that seemed to render life a beautiful thing, and raise it beyond the ordinary vicissitudes of time. Write to me. Adieu! adieu!"

CHAPTER VI.

Lord Haverdale did not appear next day; but as this was no uncommon occurrence, Jerningham sauntered forth alone, dined at a *café*, and then proceeded leisurely to the Opera.

To the writing man the Opera is, perhaps, the greatest solace a city can offer. After keeping the mind tensely strung, tragedy is too laborious, and comedy too trivial; but music is at once an excitement and a repose. The joyous chorus, the sorrowing lament, the happy canzonet, poured forth by sweet Italian voices; the trumpet-notes in which the warrior marshals his battle-array; the plaintive strains in which Somnambula's shepherd, Elvino, mourns the falsehood of his plighted love; Otello's great heart broken; Puritani's sad solemnity; or the delirious outbursts of Massaniello, alternately lull and fire the soul, soothing it to tenderness, stirring it to glory, filling it with the echoes of a thousand memories. It

must have been in some sweet dream of music that the Pythagorean philosophy of a former life first dawned on a human intellect; for in these softening intervals, strange experiences float hazily over the mind, which seem to belong to another state. Jerningham loved music as the imaginative only can: lost in its suggestive mazes, crowds of fancies crossed him, to be afterwards transferred to the page of romance, and achieve such triumph as fiction brings its weaver.

And no better prelude, after the dazzling Parisian *café*, than the Boulevards, with their mysterious, gleaming gaiety. No entertainment of Arabian Nights can equal their wondrous scenes of theatric strangeness. While the shops offer wealth outshining that of Ormus or of Ind, the beggar stands thereby, and gapes open-mouthed at things whose use he does not know; while the *restaurant* displays rich stores of choicest viands—the olive from Italy, the rare bird from Spain, the rich liqueur of a snowy northern clime, the dainties of perhaps another hemisphere — starvation stares, and hastens home, to die without a crust. Beside two lovers, talking earnestly of a golden future, an assassin moves on silently

towards his prey, the knife already half-bared beneath his cloak. The conspirator moodily pursues his scheme of revolution; and near him is the statesman, reviewing, as he strides on thoughtfully, the means that must make his country glorious. Happiness is there, misery is there; but wrapt and secret all—pleasure on the surface, anguish in the depths. Music, too, everywhere. Yon child with flowing chestnut hair, who scarcely numbers fifteen summers, could tell us stranger tales than that romance she sings so boldly to the guitar. Look at the *gamin* tumbling for a *sou*, as gay as if he were indeed a boy, instead of decrepid in vice. The *grisette* gazes enviously upon a new pink bonnet; the medical student thinks it will rain, and offers her his arm, his heart, and his umbrella, all in the same breath; the lady smiles—the pink bonnet is soon a settled thing. The newspaper-man, in all the glory of a paper lamp, offers the world's news of that evening—"*Journal des Débats, Siècle, Constitutionnel!*" "*Cinq sous!*" "*Six sous!*" "*Journal du Soir!*" And last of all comes a rush of bills—*l'entr'acte*, &c.; and your speculations are ended behind the curtains of the opera-box.

The two first acts of *Il Barbière* were finished, and Jerningham thought he should pass a solitary evening amid the splendid crowd, when the door opened, and Madame de Meranie and Lord Haverdale entered. After a few words of graceful kindness, she seated herself in the front of the box, and devoted her attention entirely to the scene, leaving the patron and the *protegé* to converse undisturbed. Lord Haverdale's health seemed to have resumed all its pristine vigour; and when he alluded to the strange circumstances which had taken place the day before, it was not difficult to see how much the excitement of new political intrigues had aided the result.

"It is strange," he said, "that, after former events, you should have accidentally become again the partaker of a confidence like that of yesterday; but I do not doubt your prudence."

"Your Lordship shall have no cause," replied Jerningham, "now or ever."

"Nor would you, I presume, regret," he continued, "anything that bound us together more closely even in the reminiscences of the past."

"I know of nothing that could afford me

aught but pleasure," said Jerningham, wistfully.

"We were talking of England," proceeded Lord Haverdale. "I told you that I had no *home*, and that I sought one there. As we approach the confines of life, we naturally bend our steps towards the land where our youth was spent, and where our ancestors loved to dwell. I begin to feel this sympathy for the country in which we first drew breath. After the present crisis, in which a curious coincidence has made me an actor, is past, and the threatened life is saved, then will I turn towards England, and make it my resting-place."

"For your Lordship's rank, there are so many attractions—so many ambitions," said Jerningham.

"And some duties, too: I feel it now," was the reply. "We owe much to the soil that yields us fortune."

"Have you decided upon any abode?" asked Jerningham.

"I have," said Lord Haverdale. "The retired grocer, whose city wealth made him the owner of Jerningham Hall, has lately died. I have purchased it, and wish you to take pos-

session in my name. The opera is over. How clever Lablache was! Take a seat home in my carriage?"

Jerningham did not reply. There was a swimming mist over his eyes; a faint chill struck upon his heart.

The old Hall, to possess which was the dream of his boyhood, the ambition of his maturer years, bought by another — and *that* other, Lord Haverdale!

CHAPTER VII.

THROUGH this same gilded Paris, on this same eve, Jean Louis hurried in agitated mood, to execute his secret task. He passed the Opera as Lord Haverdale's carriage drove away from the blazing portal, and the cold eye calmly recognised him, but with an inscrutable look that none could fathom save he to whom it was directed. There was something in that haughty glance which re-assured him, and he had need of this support, and all his courage besides; for every glance that he met seemed more earnest and full of meaning than ordinary; every one who chanced to follow in the same path, he shrunk away from with terror, as a spy—so suspicious is guilt! so fearful the gamester playing with the false die.

Yet the game must be played out, and the stake—life—won or lost.

"Fifty avengers will be on thy track, until

it is fulfilled to strike thee down, if thou art false. Breathe but a syllable of it, and thou hast dug thine own grave!"

How the dire words ring in his ear! He scarcely knows what side to espouse even now. He cannot turn without finding a new mesh of the web around him, so subtle the net laid in his path. The emotions that throng through his mind are conflicting and various. Sometimes he trembles, and will throw himself into the hands of the law, and seek for protection from the strong arm of authority. Then anger gains the ascendancy, and like the lion, he will face the hunters, and die at bay. The thought of the reward comes too. A hundred and fifty thousand francs! Luxury, ambition, pleasure—all ring in the words. But they must not be stained with blood. No gaiety at the banquet when the phantom Murder glares from among the guests. Will it not show as in a sepulchral mirror amid the rich red depths of the most costly wine? Will golden hangings scare it from the couch? Will slumber be free from the dreaded presence, though the cheek be fanned to forgetfulness by gales as soft as any ever wafted down a valley of olden Thessaly? No. He

casts away the temptation. In a last recollection comes safety; in a memory of a homely cottage, a virtuous death-bed, the holy words of the dying. The ordeal is past: the right has conquered.

After traversing several streets, he entered one obscurely lighted near the Seine, where he was joined by a man in ordinary attire, who seemed to belong to a class similar in rank to his own. Their salutation was interchanged without remark of any kind, and they entered a retired *estaminet*, and sat down in a corner alone before either broke the silence.

"What news, Louvel?" asked Jean Louis, when he had ascertained that they were out of hearing.

"Mischief!" replied his companion Louvel, in some degree of agitation; "the secret is no longer one—the truth is out!"

Jean Louis did not answer; but the colour forsook his cheek, and left him hueless as a corpse.

"You are pale!" exclaimed Louvel, regarding him suspiciously after a pause.

"And with reason," answered Jean Louis; "those who know a little may know *all*; those who know the secret may know *us!*"

"On that point, be tranquil!" was the reply: "if it were so, our heads would have rolled twenty-four hours since, from the knife of the guillotine into the basket that holds the sawdust."

"How know you, then, that the secret is betrayed?"

"The discovery was made by the Vicomte de ——."

"From whom?"

"From the Baron de St. Clair, to whom it had been confided," answered Louvel. "Fortunately the Baron no sooner heard of a plot, than he ran open-mouthed to warn the Duke's household."

"Well!" said Jean Louis, breathless with anxiety to hear the turn affairs had taken.

"Well! forewarned is forearmed. Hearing thus of treason in the camp, the Vicomte hastened to take steps to stop the officious interference of the Baron."

"Which he did—"

"By getting him arrested!" replied Louvel.

"On what pretence?" asked Jean Louis, pale again.

"On an old charge of wearing false decorations."

"But he will prove his innocence," said Jean Louis.

"No doubt; but that will take time," answered Louvel: "meanwhile, he is secure; his fancied plot is treated as a fable, and *we* shall save our heads, and gain the reward."

"By executing our purpose before the Baron's liberation?—Yes, I see!" said Jean Louis thoughtfully.

"There is no time to be lost!"

"There is not, indeed!" echoed Jean, though with another meaning; "but should the occasion not present itself before the Baron is set free?"

"True! his honesty may be dangerous; besides, he is devoted to the royal family: this difficulty has been foreseen."

"How is it to be overcome?"

Louvel took a paper from the inside lining of his hat, where it had been concealed, and showed it to Jean Louis, who glanced over the contents.

"A pass to inspect the prison of Vincennes," added the latter, when he had read it, "and signed by the Duke of Orleans!"

"That," said Louvel, "will take us into the presence of the Baron de St. Clair, and threats

and promises must do the rest. He *must* be made silent. Between certain ruin and a glorious future, it is not to be supposed that he can long hesitate to choose. If he should, there is one way in which all things can be settled by the powerful. When words fail, the blow must follow."

"Another victim!" sighed Jean Louis, unable to conceal his horror.

"Victim!" said Louvel; "you give things unpleasant names. You will call that an assassination next which is but a State necessity. Think of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and let us on!"

"Whither?"

"To the Fortress of Vincennes!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It was night. A thousand lamps shed lustre around the splendid suite of apartments thrown open by the Prince de Condé to his guests at the royal Château of Montmorency. In those saloons were assembled all the bright and beautiful, all the young and gay, all the great and gifted that Paris could yield to the bearer of one of the most illustrious names ever known in France.

What recollections does not *that* name recall? The type of honour, of chivalry, of glorious deeds, of great services rendered to the State, of victories that have become an eternal watchword.

It was a masked ball in honour of the Prince's birthday; and as it waxed toward midnight, the gaiety increased in intensity, and cast off all reserve. What hath night to do with sleep? On with the mazy dance! The monarch is linked with the vivandière; the prince with the buffoon; here Scaramouch

capers with a holy friar; there a sister-of-charity clasps Figaro in the quadrille. No ceremony to-night: no thought of aught but music and love. Hark! how the strains swell around—the soft tone of the harp, the sweet touch of the guitar, mingling in air with the perfume of choicest exotics, that make the drawing-rooms like an enchanted garden. And then sweet songs, that tell of first love, felt by other swains, by other maids; but echoing back to us, to each, to all, a memory of something that might have been one day in the past, perhaps, but never was! Every one quaffs, or dreams he quaffs, the sublime elixir. So, on, on flashes the glittering crowd, amid the lustre of innumerable lights; and music, ever swelling, floats around. And does each particular reveller harbour some secret thought, some unquiet imagining? Listen!

A cavalier, habited as Louis Quatorze, moves past; and with him a voluptuous female figure, arrayed as La Vallière. They are the Prince de Condé and Madame de Feuchères.

"You do not seem gay, Prince," said the lady, "though the gayest of all capitals has yielded its best and brightest at your bidding. What would my Prince?"

"Ma belle Sophie!" returned her companion, "you mock me; but music, laughter, wine, are but the delirium of the intellect. These people applaud me now: they hissed me when I left the Tuileries this morning."

"The canaille!"

"No! they have much to complain of, that I cannot remedy. Alas! for the fate of princes!"

"Does not love compensate for all?" and she smiled on him with her false smile; "you do not believe that I love you!"

A glance of thankfulness from the Prince, and they are gone.*

Two monks come next, mumbling to each other, rosary in hand. They pass on, solemn and inscrutable, their part well done — no intelligible meaning caught from their muttered whispers.

The music, floating everywhere like a sum-

* Sophia Dawes, when first taken to France by the Prince de Condé, was represented to be his natural daughter. Afterwards she married, under this guise, the Baron de Feuchères, still remaining in the Duke's household.

mer breezelet, like an inland sea, plays around gaily, laughingly.

Two plain dominoes now. They pause and converse :—

"I waited two hours for your Lordship," said the younger of the two.

"A dinner at the Duke's!" replied the other: "Orleans is always late. Diable! do you know I took you for an assassin!"

"My Lord!"

"You remember the revelation of the Baron de St. Clair?" said Lord Haverdale, one of the dominoed speakers.

"Yes, perfectly, my Lord!" returned his companion, who (not to make unnecessary secrets) was Edward Jerningham.

"Jean Louis Brinck has given information that the life of the Duc de Berri is to be attempted here at the ball this very night. He is concealed in a plain domino, exactly similar to our own. Curiously enough, when I arrived at the Château, I found that my private ticket had been used by a stranger before I arrived, and I had some difficulty in proving my identity. I thought I was sufficiently well known in Parisian life to correct the mistake;

but it appears not: some one is here in my likeness, and under an assumed title."

"Two monks passed just now," said Jerningham, "and they wore plain dominoes; but you know these costumes turn like the chamelion."

"True! true! no matter—there goes the Duc de Berri, with four or five gendarmes around him in disguise, who watch every one that approaches. He is ignorant of all this, of course. And Lord Haverdale shrugged his shoulders, until the hood of the domino fell back, revealing in deepest contrast his marble chiselled features.

A plain domino passed, and beckoned to Jerningham. Restrained by the presence of Lord Haverdale, he would have remained impassive; but the haughty peer, warmed by the scene, and melted by the music that poured around its exquisite strains, beckoned him to follow the stranger.

He bounded away, and was soon seated side by side with the fair domino, who had lured him from his philosophic retirement.

"This is a gay scene!" sighed the stranger sadly.

"A female voice!" thought Jerningham. "Shall we dance?" he added aloud.

"Do you wish it? no, let us observe!" replied his companion.

"It is *really* a female voice," pondered Jerningham; "I seem to have heard it before: this is no conspirator!"

In a quaint disguise the Duc de Berri passed at that moment. Scaramouch, with long sleeves, danced around him in fantastic attitudes; a clown or two played antics close to his person; two monks followed in the rear, but they could not approach, the surrounding tumblers were always (apparently by accident) too near the ducal presence.

"We forget every one here, do we not?" continued the stranger: "all is so light, so beautiful! *any* infidelity might be forgiven!"

How strangely the words grated on his ear! and not less strangely the tones in which they were uttered.

"The air of the *salon* is too hot!" added the domino suddenly; "let us breathe the atmosphere without."

She put her arm in his, and though she led him, he seemed to wander of his own accord to a conservatory, where choicest flowers shed

a dreamy perfume, and fountains played, and all was cool as in a vale of Arcady.

"Again I say you are thoughtful," whispered the fair one by his side.

"You will be offended?"

"If you tell me the truth—ah! no!"

"Real English gallantry, you will say;" continued Edward Jerningham, "but music, with *me*, always recalls the past, and I seem to see — how you will laugh!—a cottage in England, beside the gliding Thames, and such genial pictures on the walls, and such good fires on the hearth, and such merry company around, and happy lamplight gleaming over all: these are *our* vulgar ideas of Home!"

"Vulgar!—blest ideas! they have brought me from afar to see you; for home is fair, but what is home without those we love! Oh! Edward, do you not know me now?"

She raised the dark hood of the domino, and lovelier than the loveliest who thronged those gay saloons, there stood confessed before him Marie! For a moment Jerningham stood transfixed in surprise too deep to admit of utterance.

"Marie!" he exclaimed at last; and as his eyes grew moist with joy, he clasped her in his

arms: "But what dream is this? How is it you are in Paris? More than all, how are you *here?*"

"Quite an incident in a play!" she answered, laughingly shrouding her fair face once more in her hood: "you see I have learnt to act already. Can you forgive a long story, my Edward?"

"You trifle with my impatience, Violet!"

"Well then, as I wrote to you, the cottage in your absence grew sadder than I can tell, for it was love that made it our paradise!"

"Sweet one! yes!"

"None came near me, except Revel: so one day when we sat together on the river brink, talking of you, he spoke again of the strange life of the stage, foretelling me all kinds of triumph if I chose to toil, and he should be *so* proud of his adopted sister, and would watch her path, and shield it from harm with solicitude *so* brotherly!"

"True-hearted Revel! always the same—simple-minded still as when we were at school!"

"Yes! well, he came down often: I soon began to love my tasks: my tutor grew more pleased with me every visit. One day he

proposed to take me to a village near, where he played for a single night, and *I* was to act too—actually to face, and for the first time, the world that might condemn me with a word. Oh! my Edward! judge of my joy and my terror. I felt frightened and proud, and laughed and shed tears alternately. The evening came, however; Revel fetched me in a carriage; no one knew me; and at length I stood within the walls of the country theatre—such a quaint old barn of a place, with scenery so dirty, lit by dull tallow candles, guttering in the place of lamps."

"And what part was my Violet to play?"

"I was to be a Queen! Some other women dressed in the same room, whose coarse language almost frightened me; but it is not for queens to tremble, so I assumed my costume, received Revel's last word of encouragement, the curtain rose, and I was throned upon the stage."

"It reminds me of the night of my farce," said Jerningham, laughing at the recollection.

"The lights so dazzled me at first that I could see nothing. Then, as I descended, and found on approaching the front every eye fixed upon me, I stood speechless, and knew not

whether to faint or run away. A look, however, from Revel composed me; some good-natured applause came from a gentleman in a side box, and I recovered my proper majesty, spoke my part, and the stream flowed on. Oh! how my heart fluttered as we proceeded. I had to mourn an absent lover; and there I think I must have been natural, for I thought of *you*. Again there came applause—loud, unmixed, universal. Revel clasped me to his heart with joy at my success, when the curtain fell. He dragged me on the stage again, too, to receive more plaudits from my first audience. One old gentleman in the pit set light to his wig in leaning over; every one nearly was bemired with tallow, and those who escaped met another fate in orange-peel; but good humour was everywhere. The gentleman in the side-box insisted upon being introduced, and he was a great lord to whom all the village nearly belonged. Then we slipped away, dressed, Revel hurried me into the carriage, and the Queen was soon in her cottage again."

Jerningham took her hand, and pressed it tenderly; but somehow he felt sad, he knew not why.

"Yet this did not bring you to Paris?" he said at length.

"No!" she replied, "but Revel proposes other projects for you to decide.

"First tell me how you contrived to gain admittance to the ball here?"

"Oh! oh! I told you it was the incident of a play," said Marie gaily. "Upon reaching Paris, I hastened to your address, flew to your apartment, and there I learnt from Lord Haverdale's valet whither you had gone. The news drove me to despair with impatience. Suddenly an idea struck me. On the table was a ticket for the ball; on a chair near, a domino. I sent the valet Stocks away on a fictitious errand, declaring I would rest until his return. As soon as he was gone, I enveloped myself in the domino, seized the billet, re-entered the *fiacre* which had not left the door, and was soon here at Montmorency, in the château of the Prince de Condé."

"Upon my honour," exclaimed Jerningham, laughing, "you have furnished me with a hint for my next tale: the air of Paris has given my Violet a *penchant* for intrigue already. But do you know that your escapade may seriously offend Lord Haverdale?"

"Oh! surely not!" said Marie; "he will forget it ere the night is passed."

"On the contrary," replied Jerningham, "the plain domino you wear is watched everywhere, for a planned assassination of the Duc de Berri has been revealed; the projectors are known to have assumed this very disguise, and to be in the apartments now."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Marie, now really terrified; "but in company with you, no one will suspect *me*."

"The police are posted at every portal, and every avenue; and all wearers of the plain domino are to be identified before they are allowed to depart.

"But if I open the domino, they will see my female attire," she continued, "and let me pass."

"In that case, the coronet worked in the silk will show the garment to be Lord Haverdale's missing one: it is covered inside with his arms, and they are known."

Marie hastily unfolded the dark vestment, and there, as Jerningham described, were the coronetted arms in bold relief, worked by the hand of Madame de Méranie.

A moment of silence followed this unwelcome discovery.

"Only one chance remains," said Jerningham suddenly; "is anyone near?"

"No!" replied Marie.

"Then we must change dominoes," he added: "quick, my Violet! mine is a plain one; when you open it, the inside will bear no mark of ownership or identity."

"And *you?*" said Marie, "how will *you* pass the ordeal?"

"I trust to slip through without question," returned Jerningham; "the gods be with us! Come, let us rejoin the dance! Sly one! you would have seduced me into a flirtation, just to twit me with it afterwards; but I was the pink of fidelity—was I not, syren?"

A look thanked him, and they were soon whirling in the crowd.

Amid the cool sounds of the falling waters that the fountains shed in dancing spray, and the music flowing everywhere, and woman's laugh that rung in silver tones, the dance proceeded joyously, and the banquet was served now.

While the rooms were thus thinned of those

guests who proceeded to the *salle-à-manger*, two monks who had followed the Duc de Berri about all the evening, entered the conservatory which Marie and Jerningham had just quitted.

"No one is near," said the first; "we must change, and in a second, too: very fortunate I thought of the double disguise!"

"Yes!" replied the other, "the Duke was on his guard. Did you see how he was perpetually surrounded by the tumblers? Confound them! I suspect they were gendarmerie."

"Very probably; the game is up. No chance to-night: we are best away."

"Have you got your cap?" said the former.

"Yes!" was the reply.

The monkish robes were thrown under an ottoman for temporary concealment, and in the place of the holy fathers, who were there a minute since, now stood two officers of the Old Guard of Saint Louis. They walked away leisurely arm in arm, and were soon in the street, passing with the utmost *sang froid* the vigilant and disguised police, who little thought they opened the portals to assist the egress of Louis Brinck and Louvel.

Meantime Jerningham and Marie, having partaken of some refreshment, began also to

think of escape. One of the ambassadors who was present rose at that moment to make his adieux, and the Prince de Condé walked chatting with him from the *salle*, down the staircase, to the carriage which was drawn up at the portal. Now was the time. Jerningham had been introduced to the Prince, and he quietly followed him. As the ambassador departed, and the host was turning back, our hero moved the hood of his domino, to expose his features, and bowing low to the Prince wished him good-night. The good old man, as unaffectedly kind as he was noble, recognised him at once, and shook him cordially by the hand. He also inclined his head gallantly to Marie, who had slily allowed her female attire to peep through the domino. The danger was over; the officials fell back satisfied; and Jerningham and his fair companion jumped into a *fiacre*, and drove back to Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

As the lordly lion wanders round his cage, never moaning, never whining, but with fire in his eye, vengeance in his lifted paw, venom in his stifled sighs, fury in his growling wrath —so the Baron de St. Clair paced up and down in noble anger the narrow confines of his prison-house. He called aloud on earth, on heaven, for vengeance, for justice.

"Give me only justice—only judges!" he exclaimed, pausing in his rapid and agitated strides; "let my cause be tried, and I will bow to the tribunal. Give me justice!"

He sank down upon the miserable pallet of straw, and sat with his elbows upon his knees, and his face in his hands, gazing vacantly upon the sickly, flickering lamp-light, that burned so dully.

"And thus," he continued, "thus ends a

life accounted honourable, stained with a false accusation, lingered out in a loathsome cell, with none to know when the assassin fulfilled his errand, none to disprove the charge of guilt!"

He started up again.

"This accusation cannot be in earnest—no, no," added the sad soliloquy, "only a blind, a cover; I knew too much, and I am silenced: but how to foil them—the Duke must yet be saved!"

Again the long-measured pacing of the dungeon length, every step seeming to indicate the rapid passage of Thought, *lightning-like*, through the mind.

The sound of a footstep in the gallery outside his cell. The gaoler comes. The rusty chain, released from its fastening, fell with a rattle; the locks creaked back, and the door opened.

"Good evening! Monseigneur!" said the gaoler, putting his lantern on the floor of the cell, and a large bundle of heavy keys beside it; "I have brought you a faggot: it is cold to-night!"

"Thanks! a thousand thanks!" said the

Baron, feigning a shiver, though his blood was boiling.

"And here is your evening meal!"

"Bread and stagnant water!" said the Baron ironically, but without looking up; "no matter—we have had worse fare upon the battle-field!"

"No, Monseigneur; you have friends, and good ones: may they get your release! See what they have sent!"

He spread a small cloth upon a bench, and took from a basket a *pâté de foie gras*, and a bottle of Burgundy.

"By the bones of Saint Denis, a complete debauch! I shall feast like a schoolboy. But who was this friend indeed?"

"Nay, I know not," said the gaoler; "the basket was left by a gamin at the prison-door, simply directed to 'The Baron de St. Clair.'"

"Draw the cork, *mon ami!*" said the Baron, in real or apparent glee. "Diable! we must drink to the giver!" and he poured out a couple of glasses, and they tossed them off together.

"Ah! ah! rare wine that!" said the gaoler.

"Rare indeed!" echoed the Baron, "a famous vintage of many a year ago; or I have

not known Bacchus this half-century. Come! my man of keys and locks! let us have another glass together! *Sacristi!* (I am an old soldier, you know—excuse an oath)—it makes a man's heart leap within him."

"Warms him like a legacy, or a promotion," exclaimed the gaoler.

"Then, by the Virgin! thou shalt stay and finish the bottle!" laughed St. Clair, "and when I am free—as, by Saint Roch! I soon hope to be—thou shalt come and swim in this goodly wine!"

"Monseigneur!" said the fellow, bowing and stroking his beard, in acknowledgment, "you are so condescending."

"But tell me," said the Baron, "how did you get permission to bring me this?"

"I was outside the walls, Monseigneur, talking to Mademoiselle Tourtereau, the daughter of the Barber at Vincennes—very *distingué*, a thousand francs a year for her dowry, and still unengaged—when a gamin came up to me, and asked if I could give *that* to Monseigneur le Baron de St. Clair. So he gave me the basket, and Mademoiselle Tourtereau gave me a hint:—'Take it to him without a syllable, poor gentleman!' said she,

'and if you would like to meet me next Friday at the *fête*, perhaps I may be there."

"Ah! *vive l'amour!*" laughed the Baron, "then you passed the gates without enquiry?"

"Aye! aye! who should question Jacques the gaoler?"

"The fire is welcome," said St. Clair, warming himself; "come—another glass! but tell me one thing!"

"What?"

"I thought I heard carriage-wheels; the road runs below my window, does it not?"

"Yes."

"The public carriage-road?"

"Yes."

"Ah! that is company, then: I can imagine when the wheels grate by, 'There goes such an one to the Opera!' or, 'That might be taking me to the Duke de Berri's ball,' *par exemple!*"

"Goodnight, Monseigneur!"

"Stay!" said the Baron, "I cannot sleep: get me pen, ink, and paper to amuse myself, and pass the long hours of night away."

"Your letter will not be sent; our orders are strict."

"A parting glass, *mon brave!* I seek not to write letters, only to cheat the time."

"Well," said the gaoler, "here is my old ink-horn, and a leaf from the Breviary; so goodnight! and Heaven bless your Excellency! Holy Virgin! that wine was stronger than I thought; my head whirls like a windmill."

The locks are creaked back; the chain is fixed again; and the Baron is alone in his cell.

When the last echo of the footsteps of Monsieur Jacques, the gaoler, had died away, the Baron stirred the faggot of pine, until it emitted a brilliant glare, and then approached the bench where his supper was laid.

The bottle of Burgundy was about half emptied. He held it up to the light, and examined it minutely, and at every angle. But there was no scratch upon the glass. He looked in to see if anything, however small, lingered among the dregs. There was nothing, however; the pure bouquet of the vine was all that his senses could detect. Then he took the Strasbourg *pâté*, and surveyed its surface curiously on every side. There was not a flaw.

The Baron sat down for a minute in the old position, with his elbows on his knees, and his face in his hands. The viands still occupied his thoughts; he never turned his gaze from the edible portion except to examine the wine.

"'Tis in the *pâté!*" he exclaimed at last; and he took it in his capacious hands, and crumbled it up piecemeal. At length something sharp struck his finger; he extricated it from the rich meat, and found it was a small goose-quill, sealed at both ends. To split it from end to end was the work of a moment; and enclosed on the finest paper, no thicker than a hair, was a *billet.*

"Fear not!" ran the furtive missive, which the Baron was compelled to kneel down beside the glowing embers to peruse—"friends are active, though silent: the Duke is safe: ere long you are free: if you receive this, and can make a signal, *one* waits in the road below; cast it from the window."

Recovering from the first emotions of surprise, his immediate impulse was to cast the quill and the paper into the flames. Then he took the faded leaf that the gaoler had torn from the Breviary, and inscribing upon it a

vague acknowledgment, threw it through the casement.

A moment's pause ensued—a long dead silence, that his excitement lengthened into years, though it was but a moment; and then the Baron thought he heard a faint whistle below, which, first sounding beneath his window, at length died away in the distance.

"Ah!" said the Baron to himself, "so far so well!" and he filled himself another glass of Burgundy. "I know this nectar well enough—vintage of 1800—only one cellar that can boast such matchless wine, and that is in the good old Faubourg St. Germain. Lord Haverdale might as well have sent me his card or his coronet."

The faggot, burning cheerily, shed its mellowing light around the dungeon-walls, and at length subsided to a whitened, but heated ash.

The Baron sat down on his lowly pallet, and wrapping his military cloak over his limbs, sank for a brief space into deep but not unpleasing reverie. The fears that had unstrung his mind at first were now in a measure dispelled. Those fears had not been without foundation. None knew better than he how

many a spirit had pined away year after year in that fell prison, pitied at first, but forgotten too soon, and left at last to languish into decrepitude, hopeless and abandoned. Many an aching heart he knew too well had withered there, sinking gradually to decay, or, if of loftier order, swelling until it burst with grief and pride. There patriot-poets had languished, with nothing but their swan-like verses to cheer their hearts, and bring their spirits back to visions of the world without—to recollections of the Beautiful. There the warrior, chained, had bowed his eagle intellect to despair, struck by inaction into imbecility. How many hopes and fears, how many sighs and curses had not those walls re-echoed! It was no unreasoning fear that had prompted the Baron de St. Clair to call aloud for justice—even for judges. They had been refused ere now to the greatest of earth's sons—why not to him? knowing, moreover, as he did, that no common power was arrayed against his life.

But a tie still linked him with the outward world. He knew that Lord Haverdale was busy in his defence, studious in unravelling

the web; he knew how congenial to the English noble was a position calling forth all his talents for intrigue. The adventure of the viands filled him once more with hope. So he sat on the lowly pallet, wrapt in thought regarding the accomplishment of his designs, and gazing, as the thoughtful ever gaze, into the dying embers, and building castles there; when suddenly a strange light startled him, and he looked up at the dungeon-grating that served for a window, and admitted the outer air. Two round balls of fire glaring sternly, steadily, coldly, without fear, without expression of any kind, were fixed upon him without wavering. The Baron could almost have smiled within himself at the feeling of amaze, not unmingled with a deeper sentiment, wherewith his own strained eyeballs returned the ominous glare.

He flung back the scarlet cloak that enveloped him, shaded his eyes, and glared again, and lo! the cause was apparent. It was a pale grey owl, attracted possibly by the warmth, which had come to make the prison-grating a place of repose. And there it stood, winking its eyes at him with that so-wise ex-

pression of gravity and human thought that characterises the dull bird of night.

"How I long for thy liberty," said the Baron, "and yet thou can'st come to me—to *me!* To thee these walls make no prison, these bars no cage; 'tis the mind makes all, if we could but think so. Rest then, my companion of the lonely hours! we will repose together, or thou shalt be my sentinel, to watch and guard: I have had worse ere now!"

So he stretched himself to sleep upon the pallet, and the owl winked and gazed with drear solemnity.

Jacques the gaoler is bestowing himself, too, into the arms of slumber; but his arrangements are disturbed. Before his first doze is well achieved, Jacques hears a summons which (as the boatswain's whistle brings all hands on deck) awakens him to duty. He rubs his eyes, shakes the keys, re-trims the lantern, and finds two new arrivals. A strange hour for visitors when Monsieur Jacques was lost in refreshing sleep, not unmingled with dreams of Mademoiselle Tourtereau, the thousand-franc dowry, and certain goods and chattels, and silver spoons, whereof she had the rever-

sion. But the order is peremptory—an order to visit the prison of Vincennes, and communicate with any one incarcerated therein, signed by the Duke of Orleans.

"What would Monsieur like to see first?" says Jacques the gaoler to one of the visitors.

"Show me to the cell of the Baron de St. Clair!" replied the foremost of the two.

"It is here!" said Jacques, pausing at the door, and bringing into play the large bunch of keys, while the dim lamplight played fitfully along the groined gallery in uncertain flashes. "Monseigneur has retired to rest; but he will no doubt be happy to receive the visit of a friend.

"And such a friend!" replied the visitor ironically.

"Yes!" said Jacques, with a glance at the garments of the speaker, scarcely indicative of that respect usually commanded by a ducal emissary.

Again the chain falls with a crash; the locks groan harshly back; and the prison-door is opened.

"I will await you here!" said Jean Louis.

Louvel made a signal of assent, raked up

the embers, and closing the portal, shut himself alone in the cell with the Baron de St. Clair.

"A good berth, and plenty of perquisites, besides a provision for your old age: you must have a rare time of it!" said Jean Louis, when they were left alone.

"Grief!" answered Jacques, whom the Burgundy had rendered maudlin, "only grief! nobody satisfied with the gaoler! When they come in they curse me; when they go out they forget me. Way of the world, Monsieur —way of the world!"

"But sometimes you can assist the unhappy. Come! tell me! have *you*—has no one given consolation to his Excellency the Baron?"

"Consolation!" replied Jacques, "yes! I gave him a bottle of Burgundy—a rare wine and old, a present from a titled friend: that's what I call consolation!"

And the gaoler shook himself, and sleeked his feathers as if he had been the owl in the window-grating.

"A true heart and good!" echoed Jean Louis mechanically; "but what was the rest of the banquet? You must come and

taste that wine with me, friend Jacques! What shall we have to accompany the lordly grape?"

"Strasbourg *pâté*, Monsieur!" hiccupped Jacques: "that's the thing I got the Baron! that's the thing for *me!* his Excellency understands the *savoir vivre!*"

"The communication is complete!" muttered Jean Louis to himself; "the murderers may yet be foiled."

As the gaoler, overcome by the wine, sank again into a doze, Jean Louis cautiously opened the door of the cell, and stood in the presence of Louvel and the Baron.

"Never!" exclaimed the Baron in a haughty and impetuous tone, as he entered, "will I purchase liberty at such a price: I have lived, and I will die in honour!"

"Prison-walls tell no tales, Baron!" said Louvel; "you refuse, and die in oblivion; you accede, and no honours that the greatest can bestow shall be denied. Think of this ere we part for ever. Another instant, and I go, and with me your last chance of freedom!"

The owl sits on the prison-grating still, gazing gravely on the two in their deadly con-

ference, unmoved though Life and Death be in the balance.

"Your temptation is vain," said the Baron at last: "here to these walls, since none else can hear, I breathe my scorn!"

The door opened, but neither saw it, so deep their agitation.

"Beware!" continued the Baron, raising his voice to a pitch consonant with the violence of his emotions: "Beware! I am not yet abandoned: a hand is suspended over you yet, eager and powerful to strike. By yon bird sitting there so ominously, I shall not die in the Prison of Vincennes."

While the Baron uttered these words in a loud tone, with the vehemence of a prophecy, Louvel turned, saw the open door, and addressed the gaoler—

"Your prisoner has lost his reason: put him in irons!"

"Gaoler!" said a voice behind, and a dark figure obscured the doorway, clad in a deep crimson riding-cloak of the most costly velvet, "heed not that driveller!" He gave him a paper. "An order of release!" And extending his hand, he said, "Baron, you

are free!" It was an order signed by the King.

Jean Louis Brinck and Louvel disappeared. The gaoler Jacques unlocked the Baron's fetters; and the owl winked his solemn eyes, and looked down grave approval, as St. Clair left the cell with his liberator, Lord Haverdale.

CHAPTER X.

To the young and the happy, Paris is an intoxication; and Marie and Jerningham quaffed the cup to the depths. A guinea or two slipped slily into the hand of the valet, Lorrie Stocks, soon purchased silence respecting the evasion that had been practised with regard to the missing domino on the night of the Prince de Condé's ball, and Lord Haverdale was apparently too busy with his own feverish schemes to notice the continual absence of his *protegé*. So the happy lovers were ever near each other, linked hand in hand, in the enthralling first love of youth; and now were spent perhaps the most joyous hours they had ever known. All was so new, so gay, it was such pleasure to show Marie all he had seen before; the gilded scenes of amusement, the historic wonders, the triumphs of art that crowd that glorious capitol, that hour after hour fled away like a blissful dream. It was so strange, too, that

they, the orphan and the foundling, should be in the Faubourg St. Germain (for he had lodged Marie near his guardian's splendid mansion), so far from home, recalling often, as they did, in many a twilight conference the vague uncertain past. Next to the first new impression of travel upon one's own mind is the pleasure of seeing that happiness developed in another.

Thus whenever Jerningham could escape from the incessant and *recherché* gaiety that surrounded Lord Haverdale and Madame de Méranie, he hastened to the once simple, but now beautiful Marie: and they had such delicious wanderings around the neighbouring country, such pleasant evenings among the glittering *cafés* and boulevards, so sweet and uninterrupted a communion hand in hand beside the fire at night, when the faggots splintered their cheerful sparks around, and Marie sang her endearing homely English songs, that all was happiness for them—they knew no world without. Glad hours that come but once!

The effects of the education Jerningham had laboured so much to implant in Marie's mind grew more and more apparent daily; he soon

found in how rich a soil the seed had fallen. To sow there was to ensure a fertile harvest. The results surpassed all that his imagination had ever pictured; and he found himself possessed of a being, ignorant of her attractions, but lovely beyond expression, and sensitive to every beauty and refinement.

After dining one night at the brilliant Café de Paris—famous then as now—they were loitering in pleasant "idlesse" towards the Palais-Royal, when a familiar voice saluted them; and who should it be but Michael Brent! Of course the meeting, from its very surprise, was joyous enough; and an adjournment to the lodging of Marie was the first thing proposed and agreed to. Poor Michael, the *littérateur*, had no great faults at which it was the business of Jerningham to cavil; and he was so glad to see them, and expressed himself with such evident sincerity, that it was impossible not to feel a kindly disposition towards the erratic man of letters.

When they reached home, and the key was given by the *concierge*, and a fire lighted, and a bottle or two of Burgundy placed beside them—then Jerningham asked the errand of his old acquaintance at Paris.

"'Our own Correspondent,'" replied Michael Brent; "'Letters from a Resident upon the present state of France,' already advertised to appear in the *Court Echo*. *I* am the talented author."

"And you have introductions, of course?" said Jerningham.

"They are of no use," replied Michael; "I draw from Nature, from external objects. Coming along, I saw a fellow fished out of the Seine, and exhibited in the Morgue. He drowned himself because his *chère amie* Constance, who makes chapeaux in the Rue Montorgueil, had broken her faith and run away with a drummer. National characteristics enough in that story to account for a revolution."

"Explain!"

"Let me elaborate my theory," continued Michael Brent. "I was yesterday at Neuilly, getting into a boat, saw a man fishing, asked the woman who managed the boats (of course a *woman* managed them) what fish he caught? 'Oh, monsieur,' was the answer, 'he never catches anything; he only fishes to amuse himself!'"

"But what," said Marie, "has all this to do with 'Our own Correspondent'?"

"Everything," exclaimed Michael. "I was calling the other day on a lady—gave the porter nothing, yet he said, '*Monsieur est parfaitement bien;* he has a waistcoat like a Frenchman!' These are the small things in which you see the character of a people."

"I will not deny it," replied Jerningham; "and least of all now. Yours must have been a strange experience of life, Michael."

"Chequered indeed!" said Brent, with that thoughtful expression which steals over the countenance when the mind wanders busily through the ashes of the past.

"The logs burn bravely," said Marie, "the curtains are drawn—we are alone—let us tell stories; let us begin with your history, Michael."

"Willingly," exclaimed Michael Brent; so he filled himself a flowing glass of Burgundy, lit a cigar, and began.

"To avoid any misapprehension, I may as well declare at starting that I am no prince in disguise; no scion of a noble house, obscure in the first act, but shining magnificently in the dénoûement, when the secret of royal birth

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is revealed, and the rightful heir comes to his own, amid a blaze of triumph, aided by blue and red fire. My life," said Michael Brent, "is much more singular than *that*. I was born at the quaint old port of Sandwich—a flourishing harbour then, though now denuded of shipping, and famous for nothing but grass-grown streets. While I speak, that town is like a City of the Dead! awakened daily, however, by one stirring trumpet—the horn blown sonorously by the guard, as the London Mail drives through. My father was a fisherman; his boats and nets were his only livelihood; but we stole along, not too particularly of course, yet well enough; and my mother worked hard, devotedly. She loved her husband well; and I know she loved *me*, her only child. Although fond of adventure, I never took kindly to the sea, or thought of it as a career: my tastes were all of the earth, earthy. I think I should have made a capital poacher, for no one could set a springe for a woodcock, or a trap for a hare, better than the sinner before you, and no one indulged the talent more frequently. Then I had capabilities that made me useful to the country gentlemen. I could tie a fly for trout, that never failed;

knew the whereabouts of every covey of partridges for ten miles round; and could catch eels in the ditches with a kitchen-fork, or shoot a snipe on the twist at fifty yards with unerring certainty. These appear ludicrous trifles to mention now; but they form accomplishments in the country, and have gained the livelihood of many a rustic household.

"One day," said Michael, with a long, deep sigh, "the boats were prepared to fish; the weather was black and lowering; my mother tearfully endeavoured to persuade him from the voyage. I was then about seven years old. I can see her now, hanging round his neck ere he parted, filled with unusual and prophetic grief. To my father, however, the howl of the waves and the mutterings of the wind were the music he had known from infancy; they had sung him to sleep in his cradle, and soon they were doomed to be his only requiem. He came back no more!"

Michael paused, and there was something in his silence, wandering, as it seemed, into the vague Unknown, that commanded feelings of solemn pity and respect.

"Well!" continued the speaker, "the boats and nets were sold; and, I know not how,

by some agency or other that I forget, we found ourselves—my mother and I—in London. Our living was gained in many miscellaneous ways, but honourably. The struggle, however, was too much: *she* died—my only friend on earth, and I followed her to the grave—a pauper's funeral!

"Do you know," exclaimed Michael, now really excited by the reminiscences of the past, —"do you know what a *pauper's funeral* means?"

"It means a pretence of solemnity that mocks the Dead!"

"How carelessly the plain deal coffin was tossed into the earth; how scornfully the parish officials chatted beside the grave; how glibly and unconcerned the ill-paid minister read the holy service that consigns human ashes to their ultimate dwelling-place and original dust, I need not tell. A hollow sound rung on my ear, as the few fragments of clay fell from the shovel upon the coffin-lid; the grave was closed; a few stragglers, who had collected by chance, left the scene. I stood alone in the burial-ground—alone with the Dead! alone in the World!"

"And now, Jerningham, my boy!" said

Michael Brent, trying to be calm, though his lip and voice quivered with his emotions, "you will think more kindly of me hereafter; you have only seen me at my worst; you know what I am, but you are now coming to my early struggles; and when you think of the tarnish, you will remember how the metal was tried—if you find a flaw, think how the glaive was battered in the Battle of Life!

"The few trifling objects that formed the property to which I was heir, were soon disposed of for food and clothing; and when nothing remained but my rags, I went forth into the streets to gain my daily bread. I got my living for some time by taking care of market-carts, and holding horses, and running errands; but my chief chance of a meal was by picking up bones, and selling them to an old greasy, one-eyed Jewess, at a rag-shop. I had no lodging: I slept where I could—in sheds, stables, under doorways, anywhere for shelter and warmth. I endeavoured to get employment, but it was of no avail. Once I was engaged by a man who sold coals about the streets; but he made me work so hard, and beat me so badly, that I was obliged to run away. Then I took to crossing-sweeping.

A poor woman whose son had died in a crowded alley, of typhus-fever, gave me his broom, and told me to try for myself. '*He* had often earned a few halfpence for her that way,' she said; 'perhaps *I* might get on!' By accident I hit upon a crossing close to the House of Commons; and I could always tell the members, no less by their regularity, than by their rapid, earnest conversation as they passed arm-in-arm; I knew each one at last by sight, and would address him by his name. On wet days I did pretty well—perhaps two-and-sixpence; medium days a shilling or eighteenpence; and often scarcely sixpence when luck ran counter. Then there were casualties, such as fetching hackney-coaches, finding the watchmen when there was a row at night, or firemen when there was a conflagration; and gentlemen taken home when *Bacchi Plenus*, remembered me afterwards. So that on the whole I *lived*, and that was something.

"It was not, however, my destiny to sweep crossings for ever," continued Michael Brent, recovering his more cheerful mood; "one night a gentleman saw that I was saturated with rain, and invited me to the tavern opposite. I never knew who he was, but there

was a coronet on his handkerchief, and an initial worked in silk. He threw down a guinea, drank a glass of brandy, and left me the change. I was made for life, of course! What calamity can happen to the fortunate possessor of more than twenty shillings? I treated everybody in the bar; and amongst others was a Yorkshire groom, with whom I entered into conversation. After hearing my history, he proposed to take me down with him to the country, and I went.

"It was not long before I discovered that I had stumbled upon a remarkable man. There was nothing he approached which did not prosper. At first I thought it was his luck; but I soon found that it was his genius. Ward was always right. It would weary you too much to detail the thousand ways in which his talent developed itself. My rough education, imperfect enough at that time, made me but a poor judge of superiority; but I was so convinced that he possessed it, that I determined to link my fortunes with his. Had I adhered to this determination, I might have made my fortune, as the sequel proved; *mais l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose!*

"I had not been engaged with him in the

stable more than three months, when something in his manner or conversation attracted the notice of the Duke of Lucca—known at that time, in consequence of a fall from his horse in Rotten Row, by the familiar *soubriquet* of 'filthy lucre!' He took Ward with him to Italy, and I followed in the train.

"Upon Ward's arrival with his master, the Duke quickly found that the talent which kept his stud in such matchless trim, and reduced the expenses of his stable by one-half, while his horses were the envy of all Italy, might be directed with advantage into other channels. He gave him first the general superintendence of his household, and then the arrangement of his most private concerns. Everything flourished! Ward did not forget me as his fortunes advanced: perhaps he had been more than usually thirsty the night I—*then* the poor crossing-sweeper—treated him at the tavern. He educated me as liberally as if I had been his son; and he could afford it, for the Duke was generous. I suppose I must have been apt; knowledge came to me easily: a few months of application after eighteen years of age do more than the most prolonged but unwilling studies of youth. I learned to speak

the language of the country with facility. Literature became familiar to me in many shapes; I bowed before it as a neophyte; I entered step by step into the penetralia: with a mind yet untutored, I thought I knew all. In an evil hour I essayed to write myself. I made some such pictorial sketches as the pen can make, unaided by the pencil, of the beautiful scenes around the ducal dwelling, and the life that breathed in them. They were sent to England, published, and, strange to say, crude as they must have been, they were successful. This determined me! I abandoned everything: what fame like that of the author! All the instances of the successful rise of literary genius recorded in our annals rose before me, and seemed to beckon me on. I imparted my intention to Ward, who earnestly endeavoured to dissuade me. He represented to me his increasing favour with the Duke, the power his position gave him to improve my prospects, and his own personal disposition to share with me all the advantages which fortune placed within his grasp. He might as well have talked to the statue in Don Giovanni. I wrung his hand, took off my cap to the Duke, received my salary (which just sufficed

to bring me to England), and dropped down in the London streets with eighteen-pence in my pocket, two or three manuscripts, an introduction to a celebrated writer then in vogue, and thus began the life of a *littérateur*.

"How many vicissitudes I have undergone since then, *you*, Jerningham, my boy, know something of; and some of them must never be known: they are better untold. I have been asked to write a story for a magazine, and not had pen and ink to complete the task. Once, at the Marquis of N—'s *soirée*, when he insisted upon sending for a hackney-coach to take me home, I was obliged to pawn a pair of boots to pay for it! He thought he was doing me a favour: if he had only known how much good a guinea would have done me! Such are the strange contrasts that fall within the experience of the literary hack: the companion of the Prince to-day, of the bailiff to-morrow; without a home, without a position, a wanderer, and a vagabond on the earth.

"As to Ward, whom my unlucky star prompted me to quit, he rose as he had foretold: all the affairs of the Duke of Lucca were at length entrusted in his hands. From household authority he mounted upward, and

was invested with diplomatic rank. Not long since, he was despatched to Florence upon a confidential mission of the highest importance: he now aspires, and not unreasonably, to the highest honours in the state. Some day or other we shall see him return to England, with crosses, medals, and stars blazing upon his breast, the ambassador of a Prince; and I venture to add that, when we meet, he will not disdain to clasp the hand of his old *protégé*, Michael Brent—whose story, by-the-bye, may as well conclude here; so pass the cigars, Ned, and you, too" (addressing Marie), "do not think the worse of me because, instead of inventing a fable, I have told the truth. I know that you are too graceful and too generous not to look kindly upon faults that are born of the twin-sisters—Sorrow and Poverty!"

Michael Brent passed his handkerchief over his face, to hide a tear; and Jerningham pressed his hand with something akin both to tenderness and pity. Only those who have known "want" can understand how pregnant with suppressed emotion was the unbroken silence that ensued!

Poor Michael Brent! let us not judge thee:

miseries enough have rained upon thee in this working-day world; deeply hast thou suffered the agony and the sweat! Too apt are the careless, unsympathising multitude to pass the worn author by. So Sheridan lives a splendid beggar; so Otway dies of want; so Chatterton's genius knows no reward; so Johnson wanders London's eternal streets—not one night, but many—destitute of the trifle that would have commanded a shelter.

The world's gay butterflies delight their leisure with Fancy's rich imaginings; but think not from what strange sources spring those winged thoughts that make thousands, aye, perhaps millions think! Enough for them to gather the honey, thoughtless of the bee; to admire the silken web, but never heed the worm that has spun its bowels away! So let us not judge thee harshly, Michael Brent: thou hast suffered, as well as sinned!

"Well, Michael, my boy;" said Jerningham, when the brief history was concluded, "you have told us nothing that does not speak in your favour trumpet-tongued; you have fought and conquered; you are here! If all men told their tales as honestly, what strange reve-

lations we should have! but Diogenes goes far with his lantern, and spies into many faces ere he finds truth."

"To tell you all I have known and done as a *littérateur* would be too painful," replied Brent; "let it remain untold: there are chords that only vibrate to a key solemn or sad; and why should we bend to either? Let us turn to happier thoughts; I am a real epicurean! *Carpe diem!* Here is our beautiful Marie; can *she* tell us nothing, while we finish this glorious wine?"

"Ah!" answered Jerningham, "our Michael here has not hidden his light under a bushel, nor will *you*, my Violet."

She stole her small white hand within his, and hesitated.

"Come, Marie; you proposed that we should tell our histories; you cannot escape the ordeal."

The Burgundy flows round, the faggots are stirred into a merry blaze; and, while they crackle before the trio so strangely met, she begins.

"My life," said Marie, "seems to be a two-fold dream. My earliest recollections are of luxury. I remember nothing, I can describe

nothing of that time but a dark loving woman who tended me; a sense of everything costly and refined, and all things happy, all things magnificent. Then came a change. One night, a moonlight night (and it was not in England, for the rays shone through a lattice trellised with the teeming vine), I was taken suddenly from my bed; a number of lights flashed over my eyes, and blinded them. I called upon HER whom I had known as mother—*known*, for she pressed me hourly to her heart of hearts; but rough male voices spoke only in reply. I was hastily wrapped up in blankets and furs; a carriage rolled up: I was borne away, hour after hour, sleepless, hopeless, for many a weary league—no mother near, but one stern stranger ever by to *guard* me, as I thought, rather than lead me on to a happy resting-place. At length we came to the sea —young as I was, I knew it was the sea; for I had seen rivers before, and it was too vast to resemble them. We embarked; weariness made me slumber; and, when I was awakened by a dull, heavy grating of the vessel against the harbour, I felt that we were in another land. No one with me now but the stern stranger.

"After that, my thoughts became for a space confused and broken. I remember nothing but travel, daily, nightly, onward, as it seemed to *my* untried spirit, for ever and ever. At length a pause. A day passed, then another, without a sign. I played about in the sunshine, and wandered among the flower-grown tombs of a churchyard near: and so I almost began to forget the grief of being alone, and was getting resigned and happy in my childish way, when they came to me one day and said that *he* was dead.

"I knew not what they meant for some time; but they took me to a chamber where I saw, upon a bed, a form stiff and immovable, and at last I began to understand. I saw that the rigid features were not what I had been wont to gaze upon: I felt an atmosphere in the room redolent of the grave.

"After the funeral they endeavoured to explain my position to me: I could comprehend nothing. They sought to glean from me something that might give a clue to my origin: I could tell nothing, I knew nothing—my existence was unaccountable even to myself.

"A stranger, passing accidentally, who had heard my story, offered to take me under his

charge. I was then about nine years old, and I agreed, in a kind of stupor, to follow him, just as the stray dog answers any whistle that sounds friendly.

"He took me with him to a large house in London. I was too young to understand his affairs then, but subsequent considerations have taught me that he was a stock-jobber; and when first this fact dawned upon me (I know not how) I looked into the dictionary to find out what it meant, and there I found that a stock-jobber was 'a low, shabby wretch, who got his living by buying and selling shares in the funds.' It surprised me to learn this, for he lived in every comfort. Still I remarked that sometimes he came home in great glee, and at other times sorrowful; and he had always a book and pencil in his hand every evening, no matter who visited him; and the conversation between him and his friends was always of ups and downs, and strange vicissitudes in money matters, whereof I could make nothing.

"Months flew away; I was neither guest, child, nor servant, and these months became years. The household, however, was not a flourishing one. The parties became fewer;

the attempts at gaiety, though few and far between, more languid, and at last the servants were sent away, and I lived alone with him in the large echoing house. Luck had run against him: I know now what he suffered —that he was almost penniless. Frequently he would give me a small trifle, and disappear for days, pursued by creditors, who had little indeed to gain, for inch by inch the house was stripped to supply his wants; so that, had they entered, they would have made no booty.

"Thus time passed on, strangely, sorrowfully; and one day, my Edward, when left alone, I wandered out merely to breathe—you know the rest. I was entangled in a crowd, my life endangered by a passing horseman, *you* saved me—*me!* the poor outcast; and Marie is here, with no hope but in your love, no happiness but in your presence, here hand-in-hand sit Marie the Foundling—"

"And Jerningham the Orphan!" replied the voice she loved!

CHAPTER XI.

Lorrie Stocks is assisting Lord Haverdale at his toilet; and the Baron de St. Clair, comfortably ensconced in an easy chair beside the fire in the ante-room, chats with Milord the while. Both are gay; the Baron full of gesture, the English gentleman calmly triumphant. They speak in Italian: Lorrie Stocks thinks it must be French, and wonders he does not catch up a word now and then; but Milord knows more than his "gentleman," and is never found out by a casual syllable. Lord Haverdale is fifty, and knows most things, even how far to trust his valet.

"By the way, I saw your friend, Monsieur Jerningham, in the Boulevards, to-day. Beautiful creature with him—who is she?"

"I know not," replies Milord, who knows all about it, but who enjoys a secret too much not to keep it all to himself.

"I thought she resembled your Lordship," continues the Baron, "the same chiselled features and marble contour; she is not a relation then?"

"Impossible!" replied Haverdale; "he has been in France before, and has friends here! besides, youth!—you know, Baron!"

"Ah! *ma foi!* we have been young ourselves!"

"Yes!" added Haverdale, sitting down on a couch beside his friend—"his is the really happy age. People talk of the joys of infancy: they are but ignorance and inanition. Others make boyhood the golden oasis: what is it, but pleasure that is boisterous, mirth that is ridiculous, and bears no reflection? But from twenty to thirty comes a truly millennial time: the passions are unworn; the intellect shows its first rich flower, clad in glorious colouring. If I could live again, I would start, not at sixteen, but at six-and-twenty!"

A servant announces that the carriage is ready, and that Madame de Méranie waits.

"The Duc de Berri will be at the Opera tonight," said Lord Haverdale, as they descended to the *salon*."

"Indeed!" replied the Baron, and his voice

echoed in strange hollow tones, as they moved away through the corridor.

In a snug little stage-box Jerningham is already at the Opera with Marie, the curtains drawn between them and the world of Parisian fashion. "Our own correspondent," Michael Brent, is with them, complimenting her with justice upon the possession of her best looks. How beautiful she is! Her features wear to-night the very character described by the Baron; the marble faultlessness contrasted with the rich dark hair would be cold, but that her violet eyes light up all with the woman's unfathomable soul of love and earnestness. The evening wears on!

Not all the world so gay, however. On the Pont St. Michel stands a sombre figure, gazing into the moonlit waters of the Seine. Calmly they steal away like the hopes of his youth.

"One plunge!" said Jean Louis, for it was he, "and this troubled fever ceases, and then follows, nothing—*nothing* but the Unknown!"

Lighting a pipe, and assuming an air of *insouciance*, he leant over the parapet. Suddenly he looked round stealthily, dashed the pipe away, and gave one long vacant glance on all things near—one of those bewildered looks

that compress the recollections of a lifetime into a second of the dial. He was raising himself upward; his eye was fixed upon the dark walls of the Morgue; he figured himself in that second of time stretched there, cold, motionless, the suicide! when a hand arrested him, and he turned with horror to see Louvel.

Neither spoke; but Louvel led him passively from the bridge, and they threaded the streets —deserted now, for it was late—that led to the Opera. The bustle of carriages and pedestrians increased as they got near, and then, as if relieved from his spell-bound silence, Jean Louis paused.

"What would you?" he exclaimed.

"The hour is come!" replied Louvel, "in a few minutes the Duke's carriage will be ordered up to the portal."

"Gracious Heaven!" faltered Jean Louis, "do you mean—?"

"I do!" replied Louvel; "take this!" and he gave him a dagger; "it is sent by the Vicomte de ——; you have not forgotten the oath, or the *penalty of disobedience!*"

Jean Louis, trembling and faint, looked into the face of the speaker, to see if it were all real. It was no dream! The features of

Louvel were suffused with a deadly purple, but rigid and unchanging.

"I strike first!" he added, in a low tone; "if I fail, then yours be the second blow; let it reach home!"

His heart chilled to ice, his eyesight swimming, Jean Louis followed Louvel to the door of the Opera.

The brilliant crowd was pouring out fast. Among them Lord Haverdale and Madame de Méranie; while close behind were Marie and Jerningham. A lane was made for the Duc de Berri to pass. The royal carriage rolled up to the door; the Duke, taking the hand of the Duchess, was in the act of supporting her up the carriage steps, when Louvel darted in; there was the gleam of a poignard, and the Duke fell back into the arms of his attendants, stabbed to the heart!

Jean Louis fled.

Among the few known friends who were admitted to the apartment where the bleeding remains were carried, were Lord Haverdale and the Baron de St. Clair. They soon found that the assassin had done his work too well! In a few instants the Duke ceased to breathe.

Lord Haverdale turned away, and seeing his *protegé*, he beckoned him to approach.

"It is all over!" he said; "go back to England, and take possession of Jerningham Hall!"

END OF FIRST BOOK.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XII.

Evening in England—at Greenlawn! Draw the curtains closely; pile on the faggots till the room gleams merrily; place the easy-chairs in front of the blazing hearth. Up and around sparkles the light, and the lamp illumines the table and its fruits and wine. Jerningham and Marie are again in their English home.

Home! sweet thing, unknown to other lands; sweet word, that has no synonyme in other tongues; name untranslateable, to all else save the sea-girt islander an airy nothing, do not troops of household spirits rise at thy call? do not the fairies, headed by calm content, appear at thy magic bidding? are they

not now around the lovers, filling their hearts with happy thoughts, and making their river-side cottage a more gladsome dwelling-place than a palace without them? Hail to the Lares of the hearth—the spirits of home!

But the roaring of the winter wind without has not restrained Doctor Pip from saddling his wonderful bay pony, and coming to welcome them back. His face is as red and his voice as loud as ever. Of course, the bay pony can be put up in the stable for half-an-hour, while Doctor Pip has a chat and a glass of wine.

"Wipe him down, James," says Jerningham to the servant.

"No, no! no occasion!" roars Pip.

"Give him a feed then."

"On no account!" exclaims Pip, louder than ever. "He isn't used to it—only spoils him—goes better without it."

So the bay pony, that does his share of the seven thousand three hundred miles of parish peregrination, is fed on the sly, with great mystery.

Doctor Pip is still at war with the Parson; and vestry triumphs over the Reverend Fribble reduce that sainted power daily to a state of

despair that tea cannot ameliorate, neither sandwiches soothe.

"Would you believe it, sir?" says Pip. "He wanted to insult the rising generation—to make the parish charity more conspicuous, and turn up the boys and girls with yellow! Sir," continues Pip, "I went to the vestry, and unmasked him. I laid the loathsome proposal bare, in all its ostentatious nakedness. I said, sir, that if we were to give alms with one hand, and not to let the other know it, as Holy Writ declares, could we—*we* Christians—turn up our boys and girls with yellow?"

The Doctor hammered the argument into the table with his fist, and made the glasses ring again.

"Common sense was on my side, sir; and so were the mothers of the children—I mustered them five-and-twenty strong. At first they were afraid; but I gave them the watch-word of 'Down with the Yellow,' resolved six of them with the loudest voices into a committee, with power to add to their number, constituted myself chairman, passed votes, seconded them, organized a husband or two into the movement, rushed on one Saturday

night to the charge—and Fribble fell! He compromised with a proposal of tea and buns. The banquet took place on the heath; and the children, partaking too freely of the latter spongy amalgamation, were all ill for a week after. But I am getting the parish round again, sir. The effect of buns on the stomachic organs, though painful, is not lasting; and," concluded Doctor Pip, as a carriage drew up at the door, "the village is saved. We shall not be turned up with yellow!"

The glasses had not ceased ringing from the final thump with which the Doctor recorded his latest triumph, when a well-known voice interrupted them, a familiar laugh rang merrily in the hall, and Greville entered, full of life and spirits.

"Welcome back!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with Marie and Jerningham both at the same time. "I have been staying with the Marquis of H—— for a day or two; and, as he lent me his carriage to take me to town, I thought I would give you a hail *en route*. Ah! Doctor, how are you?"

"Sound as a salmon, sir," said Pip: "no one is ever ill at Greenlawn."

"So much the better for the village, and the worse for the doctor, eh! And the parish?"

"Just escaped being turned up with yellow!" said Pip, not at all loath to tell the story over again.

"And how did the Violet like Paris?" continued Greville, patting Marie on the back, with something of fatherly fondness.

"Ah!" exclaimed Marie; and the inclination of her classically-shaped head conveyed the rest.

"You thought Paris and Paradise the same, of course," added Greville; "but do you know that I have had all sorts of enquiries about you during your absence? You remember Sir Edwin Malcolm, the little baronet, who was introduced to you in the theatre, when you acted at —— with Revel?"

Marie nodded assent.

"He is dying to see you again, and vows that nothing on earth or in the waters under the earth shall prevent it. You are to be the star of the stage—nay, of the age—and *he*, little Sir Edwin, is to bring you out."

"Who is he?" asked Jerningham.

"The possessor of one of the oldest baronetcies in Scotland," replied Greville, "ten thousand a-year, and the mind of a low-comedy man, or a tumbler in yellow tights. I met him at Paris, and asked him where he was going. He said he was walking to the Penny Royal, then to the Maiden Lane, and after that to the River Lee! Would you believe that he meant the Palais Royal, the Madeleine, and the Rue de Rivoli? And to finish it all, on the way to his hotel, he insisted upon my accompanying him to a *café*. 'What would Monsieur please to take?' said the *garçon*. '*Café-au-lait*,' he answered—'WITH MILK'!"

At this moment the Doctor received a parish summons; so the bay pony, the picture of religious resignation and skeleton despair, was dragged from the unusual plenty of Jerningham's stable, to carry away the portly Pip at full gallop.

"I am not sorry that we are left alone," said Greville, when he was gone; "for I have come to tell you of your new book. I have published it—and—"

Jerningham's cheek paled with agitation for a moment; and Marie, half-rising in her chair,

bent forward, with that eager, impassioned look of hope and fear so well expressed by the olden painters in the strained eye and parted lips.

"And—not without success," continued Greville.

The two listeners breathed again. The fate of a first work is no small matter of agitation to its author, as some stray reader of this present may happen to know.

His book had been published, and not without success; but the success was peculiar, and Greville's fears, or rather prognostications, expressed when he first saw the manuscript, were daily realized. The book was too philosophic, too thoughtful, for the multitude. The mere novel-reader skipped pages of profound reflection to follow the story on which it hung. The student, with sterner habits of thought, declared the chapters of romance to be an intrusion upon the philosophy. Few and far between were the readers whose intellects, according with the mind of the writer, at once expansive and subtle, could alternately sink and soar—leave the grave for the gay, the lively for the severe; who could play with the

elegant trifler upon the surface of life's follies; who could dive with the dreamer into the inmost recesses of the human soul, and fearlessly scrutinize its strange, chaotic mysteries. The subject he had chosen to illustrate was "Temptation;" and its various effects upon various organizations afforded ample scope for all his powers. To paint men and manners as they *were*, not as they ought to be; to show how the best might often yield, while the worst might sometimes resist; to limn the sun of human virtue, in its most unclouded hour, spotted ineffaceably; to bring into real and natural relief the redeeming features that vice, in its vilest form, could not blot out, so stamped were they in the heart by the divine will that had breathed there the breath of life—to paint thus, was to picture human nature, to tell the truth, to be certainly unpopular, to be possibly immortal! Thus had Jerningham written; and his work, with all its eloquence and its wit, all its learning and its knowledge, all its original wisdom and profound discernment, was thrown listlessly aside by the *Many*, whose tastes the mountebanks of letters degraded themselves to please.

But there are better triumphs than the

popularity of the day. The world is but a theatre, whose half-dozen hours of gas-light see many varieties. Shakspere's undying inspiration opens the scene; the audience applauds. Then comes a *farceur*, with a comic song; and whispers of approbation for the bard become thunders of adoration for the vulgar singer. The rocket eclipses the star while a few seconds pass: yet a little while, and the brimstone and saltpetre have lived their fleeting life; but the planet shines on, and shines for ever.

Jerningham's work was neither popular nor profitable; but it interested the better order of minds, and, like rich wine, it was liked more as it grew older. It soon transpired that he was the author, and its boldness gained him golden opinions alike from the aristocracy of mind and rank.

"I have an invitation for you from the Marquis," said Greville, as he stepped into the carriage; "and he made me promise that my next visit to his seat should not be made without you. He has given your book to the King! And as to the Violet here, we must watch her during your absence, or the cottage

will be rifled of its treasures by Sir Edwin Malcolm."

And Jerningham and Greville laughed to see Marie curl her lip in beautiful disdain at one of the oldest baronetcies in Scotland!

CHAPTER XIII.

Not forgetful of Lord Haverdale's parting injunctions, Jerningham rose one morning, and cantered leisurely over to the Hall. The air was clear and crisp; the early sunlight glittered in thousands of half-frozen dew-drops; the atmosphere had that character of bracing vigour only known on a fine day in England.

Doctor Pip had lent him the bay pony; and that attenuated quadruped, looking on the present trip merely as a holiday, compared with his ordinary parish perlustrations, was almost frisky, or as nearly so as a doctor's pony can be. It was pleasant to see him prick up his ears, and make a pretence of pawing the ground, and assume altogether a rakish air of being ready for anything, as if an extra feed of corn was to carry him round the world. So they sauntered along; and, by degrees, Jerningham became sensible of a merry sound of church-bells—and this, too, just as they were passing through Violetdale.

He had been weighing in his own mind whether he should pause at the Crooked Billet, but this decided him; so he drew up at the hostel-door.

The ostler ran out; but where was Hiccup? The bay pony was housed and unsaddled, but no landlord abaised himself before the new arrival.

On the contrary, Jerningham found his way alone to the market-room, which Dobbs (once the vice-chairman, but now passed away) called erewhile the Muses, and his boots soiled the chintz, with none to remonstrate. But the church-bells still rung on. The bottle-green fly that did duty on great occasions drew up at the portal; and then, and not till then, did Hiccup appear—in broad blue cloth and brass buttons, his iron-grey hair combed brilliantly into his eyes, his waistcoat of flaming red, a pair of gloves in his hand, and a cabbage-rose fastened near his heart. Spartan in his old age, Hiccup was about to marry again!

The fly drove away, the bells rang louder than ever, the crowd rolled on to the church; and then the loiterers came back, and so did the fly, and so did Hiccup, with a bride half-a-century younger than himself, who was hence-

forth to do the honours and adorn the bar of the Crooked Billet.

As he alighted, he caught sight of Jerningham, and hastened up to pay his respects; but love, that laughs at locksmiths and many other sublunary things, finds three pair of stairs no joke at seventy-five; so Hiccup's attempt at youthful elasticity was but a sorry effort, and finished, after some smothered wheezing, in a protracted cough.

Jerningham congratulated him with becoming gravity, but could not learn from any source what had overcome the landlord's invincible horror of Hymen. Hiccup was alone in his councils; and no Delphic oracle shall ever reveal the mystery. After the dinner, there were speeches. One gentleman, in the commercial travelling line, a wag in his way, with expectations formerly, which the youth of the bride now rendered tremulous, declared that it was "buttons." The want of "buttons" on his shirt had nearly reduced *him* to the same condition. Another friend of the family—a bachelor, of course—suggested that it might be "collar-strings." And, as Jerningham moved away from the festive scene, a third guest, assuming a philosophic tone (this was

after some old whisky had been round the table twice), proceeded to add that, viewed in reference to shirt-buttons and collar-strings, marriage became a *touching* ceremony—a sentiment which was not considered dignified by the ladies present, and which, accordingly, did not receive the praise it merited.

But Doctor Pip's pony is saddled again; and Jerningham, smiling at the farcical scene he had accidentally witnessed, hastens on to another spot, that awakens very different emotions. He stands within the halls of his ancestors; and though the authority he brings is supreme, his birth-place seems more than ever to have passed away from him beyond redemption. He wanders through every room, through every glade. Calmly repose the deer without; calmly, within, look down the pictured knights. Hour after hour passes on, and day wanes; and, with the starlight, he finds himself in the same apartment (overlooking the forest) in which his mother sank back on her pillows, and died. Every detail of that event, gathered from many sources, was familiar to him—the furniture of the room, indeed, had been scarcely altered—and he could fancy himself once more in his cradle, Lord Haverdale entering in

funeral attire; his mother, with her eyes fixed on her last sunset.

The lamp had gradually burnt to the socket, while he lay absorbed in reverie; and he was sinking into slumber upon a sofa near the window, when a strange sound grated on his ear. He listened, thinking it was a dream; but the sound continued, as of some one digging or loosening stones. The many unearthly stories current about the spirits that from immemorial time had haunted the grey old castle, flashed over Jerningham's mind; and, though he remained undisturbed, the coincidence was just forcible enough to attract his attention. The starlight, brilliant in the heavens, shone through the trees and their shadows with a lustre dusky and dim. He advanced to the window, gazed through the large massive pane, and there he saw a mantled figure, groping apparently in the earth, just below where he stood.

So near, that from the balcony outside he could almost have touched it.

The figure rose to its full height, concealed something hastily, and gazed around. It began to move away. Jerningham started up, unfastened and flung open the window; and

then, advancing on the terrace, jumped down upon the velvet sward—upon the very spot where the intruder had stood an instant before!

But the figure had vanished! He was alone in the starlight!—alone with a wheeling bat!

CHAPTER XIV.

Not alone to light the author's vigils now burnt the midnight oil in the cottage by the river. Another and a fairer student pored over antique volumes, and pondered upon future fame. And Revel was always there to mingle his knowledge of the cold dull realities of the life of the stage with the yearnings of a genius otherwise too fervid; so that with Marie, the boundary between expectation and truth was passed easily and naturally; and that disappointing first shock which falls so heavily upon many a young and fertile brain, was spared to the favourite pupil of the great dramatic star.

She had an instinctive knowledge that the step she was taking was not approved by Jerningham. But her hopes were so pure; her intentions so upright; she knew so well on the one hand, how much talent burned within her; on the other, how much her pro-

tector sacrificed for her daily: it was only honest—it was only just to seize the independence within her grasp. And she loved him so much, a cloud upon his brow made her languish for days. Could she not clear those clouds away? He had often talked of the difficulties of his position, of doubts regarding his health and means, of the uncertainty of Lord Haverdale's favour. If *she*, poor Marie the Foundling, could ever assist his onward journey—if she could ever smooth the path of him who seemed to have saved (or given) her existence, and whom she loved so much—was not any sacrifice cheap that made the offering worthy? Yes! she resolved to toil on, to hope on, and trust to the future, to do her pure heart justice. As many a generous high-souled woman had done before her, and died and made no sign.

It would be easy at this page of our story to paint fictitious scenes of stage effect; to describe wonders never witnessed, and elaborate triumphs unknown save in romance. It is not our intention, nor would it fall within the scope of truth.

Success for the most part is a gradual growth—not mushroom-like, the produce of a

night, but brought to fulness by careful seed and thrifty harvest.

Marie appeared on the stage with Revel, and ascended step by step, but so slowly that her progress gave but little food for enthusiasm. Still she pursued the track she had marked out with earnestness and perseverance. She hoped that the *one* day would come—the *one* tide in human affairs that leads the faithful on to fortune, and it came at last. The feigned illness of a favourite actress brought forth all her powers, and she did not task them in vain. The newspapers were eloquent next day, no less in praise of her talent than her extraordinary beauty. That actress was not ill again in a hurry, but Marie had passed the Rubicon. Without any convulsive leap she now moved upward—surely, leisurely; and if she had still much to achieve, there was soon nothing beyond her ambition. And strange to say, Scandal's envenomed tongue neither stung nor sought to sting her. Her manner assumed a kind of prescriptive right to be judged fairly. Scatheless and unblemished amid a hundred admirers, no scheme or temptation could keep her an instant from the carriage in which Revel or Jerningham waited to convey her homeward

from the scene of her toils at first, her triumphs now. There was something in her lofty mien that the mere fashionable haunter of the "*coulisses*" could not approach. Even Sir Edwin Malcolm, who wished to be polite, grew as confused in his English as he had formerly been in his French, and could not understand why the beauty, so thankful for his applause in a country barn, should have changed its character so much as to make him blush when she approached.

And Jerningham, her lover!

Could HE lament the career she had carved out, when he saw her hurry so gladly from many a bright success to the greater triumph of his sheltering embrace?

CHAPTER XV.

"EDDY," said Dick Raven, addressing thus familiarly his bosom friend, Sir Edwin Malcolm—"Eddie, your face is as long as Oxford-street!"

Sir Edwin sighed.

"Longer, if anything," continued Dick.

Sir Edwin drew tighter the tassels of his magnificent dressing-gown, and sighed again.

"And in every line," added his friend, "I read early dinners, hurryings to the theatre, stage-boxes, and bouquets."

Sir Edwin, unable to deny the soft impeachment, lit a fresh cigaretta.

"Now take my word for it," said Dick, "your sighing, and simpering, and getting thin, and hanging verses upon hawthorns, though lover-like, availeth nothing. The brisk admirer succeeds the best. And then, too, you talk of dying! Young, and the possessor of a fortune—pshaw! death is a mistake,

waste of time—worse than that, a waste of *pleasure*—really quite absurd! This bottle of champagne is empty—shall I ring?"

Dick Raven, without waiting for the acquiescent nod, rang the bell; another bottle of champagne foamed before them, and Sir Edwin smoked, and his friend sipped in peace.

It was mid-day to the fashionable—that is to say, two or three in the afternoon, when these two speakers sat in the young baronet's rooms overlooking the Park. The apartment they occupied was arranged very tastefully, according to the peculiar fancy of the owner. His walls were a perfect historic catalogue of triumphs. In a classic print with a broad frame, suspended over the mantel-piece, was recorded the victory of the Bedford Buck over the Northumberland Nipper — two prize-fighters immortal in the ring, but forgotten by the outer world, so insensible is ordinary humanity to the highest merit. Like scintillations from this brilliant focus, though subdued in their radiance, flashed far and near portraits of all the ballet-dancers who had been famous or infamous since Sir Edwin's majority. He had made a religious point of never missing one of them: and there they were, in costume be-

witchingly scanty, as Peris, as Fire-Queens, as Daughters of the Danube, as Witches of the Wye, as Spirits of all the elements in turn—as anything, in fact, that commanded fifteen shillings a week. These were the household gods of Sir Edwin—the Lares of his hearth in Piccadilly. There was not wanting, however, one redeeming point. With all the eccentricities, weak and absurd as they were, that arose from his neglected education during a long minority, Sir Edwin had one characteristic that made a man of him, after all. His guns and fishing-rods, his hunting-whips, rifles, and horns were placed opposite the ballet, like the strong side of his character, asserting itself against the weak; and thus days of snipes in Ireland, trout in Wales, grouse in Scotland, salmon in Norway, glorious boar-hunts, dangerous and health-inspiring, in German forests, stood out in bold relief against the gaslight of the stage, as a star shines purely compared with the glare of an illuminated picture. Sir Edwin Malcolm had neither talent, genius, nor wit. He could not be a great man in any way; and he was too thoughtless to be very good even; but he was not contemptible, and those who inwardly smiled at his follies were still

glad of a friend whose good nature never wavered for a moment. He had far more acquaintance than many a cleverer man; for intellect concentres itself upon a few objects earnestly, while smaller minds are more diffusive.

Nor let the reader think disparagingly of the chase, "red battle's counterfeit, the frowning war-god's buxom bride." Doth not the very word bring back a thousand joyous recollections of the dewy sunrise, of the healthy fields, of nature in its richest garniture—the pleasant rest at mid-day, under the greenwood-tree, in autumn-time, when the cloth is spread, the nut-brown ale flows, the dogs come caressingly for their share; when the body springs up elastic from that fatigue which will give rest and happy dreams, and the spirit of a race-horse upon waking again? And then when the result of your toils is spread forth, is it not an evidence of superiority? No sportsman can be called a fool: his vigorous nature redeems him; it redeemed Sir Edwin Malcolm.

But Sir Edwin is love-sick now, and will not be comforted. Only those who have seen the actress's victim can tell how deeply the

arrow wounds. Sir Edwin no sooner found out the truth than he instantly applied to Dick Raven. Everybody in the Noodles' Club went to Dick Raven, no matter what the emergency: he was an authority upon all points; could give sound advice upon every subject; could tell you what to do with a jibbing horse, or a pouting mistress run restive; he knew the best investments for money, and was always ready to "put you on" a certainty for the next Derby. Dick, in fact, could take care of everybody but himself, and was always delighted to neglect his own affairs for the sake of arranging something for somebody else. So Dick was always poor, and occasionally he disappeared for a space from fashionable gaze; but when he came back, and "things" were arranged, every one asked him to dine just the same as before. He would mention, casually, that he had been staying with his sisters down at the family place, on account of his liver; though there were vague traditions about a single room near Clare-market. But then, who ever thought of questioning Dick? There couldn't be much the matter with a fellow who looked so happy.

Having been called in to prescribe in the

present case, Dick proceeded to give his opinion—an opinion formed maturely upon a knowledge of human nature in general, upon woman's nature in particular—an opinion elevated perhaps, in some degree, by friendship and champagne; but on the whole, said Dick, undoubtedly sound. It was to the effect that Eddie should take the stage-box for the season; that he should cease sending bouquets, or rendering his attentions remarkable; that he should contrive an introduction to Jerningham, through the manager; that he should *fête* the guardian until he was invited to meet the ward; and that *then* he should come to *him*, Dick Raven, for further instructions.

The champagne and cigarettas being nearly finished, Dick put on his hat, merely adding, as a piece of final advice– "Don't die, Eddie; it's absurd!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A DULL heavy day has slowly declined into a stormy night at Greenlawn.

The wind, that has sobbed and complained like a fretful child, now leaves sighing among the sedges, and roars and whistles among the lofty trees, like the distant sound of the ocean billows. The clouds that fled so fast across the moon, have settled into a murky portentous mass. The river bubbles uneasily even where it had been most calm all day; it rushes angrily up silent creeks; it wakes up sleeping swans; it startles the wild-duck and the water-rail with its moaning; it disturbs the bargeman, who, drowsily at anchor, watches until the tide may turn; it whirls past the cottage gate, and foams into wrath at opposing piles and arches. Then there is a sudden pause, and down comes

the spiteful rain, in heavy splashes, so fast and furious that the river becomes froth, and mingles with earth and sky into a misty gloom.

No one abroad to-night!

Doctor Pip is at the fireside, and means to stay there. The olive-branches of the Pip establishment, hushed to rest in many cradles and cribs, are awakened by the storm, and, having signalized their return to consciousness by a kind of round game at mutual aggression, they sink to slumber, again oblivious of their wounds.

Mrs. Pip thought a nice light supper would do the Doctor good, after parish fatigues; so tripe and spinach have soothed his inward man, and he feels emollient and happy. He is graciously permitted to light a cigar; and the fire being stirred and the lamp trimmed, he is smoking it now; he would be entirely content, in fact, if it were not for a lurking fear that he may be summoned forth, which gives him something of the same sensation that an alderman might feel who was compelled to partake of his venison and turtle with civic appetite, but balanced upon a tight-rope.

The storm roars on: the more excuse for another glass of whisky-toddy, which he pro-

ceeds to concoct forthwith, and whereof Mrs. Pip condescends to sip at intervals, just to keep her liege lord in countenance—not that she likes the flavour; it is rather disagreeable to her than otherwise.

The Doctor is watching the wreaths of smoke that flow upward from his lip, when it comes —, not an ordinary pull at the eternal bell, but a summons that is loud enough to shake the house down.

"Oh! if you please, the Doctor be to come directly; there be some-one at the 'Leg of Mutton,' and she be mortal bad to be sure."

"Confound it!" said Pip, "if that isn't the voice of Daft Jem!"

"'Leg o' Mutton,' Sir," continues the voice, as Doctor Pip presents himself at the door; "third public down the road as leads to the church at —"

"Two miles, if it's a yard," sighed Pip.

"Just about," added Daft Jem, with provoking indifference.

"Mrs. Dapper, at the tallow-chandler's?" asked Pip, in despair: "really too bad; that woman has lost her bump of calculation; thought she wouldn't come on this three

weeks; and the last bill not paid, too; obliged to take it out in candles and red herrings!"

"No! no! it bean't her," said Daft Jem; "it be a lady in the best room, and she do go on tremendous!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Pip, in an altered tone; "best room, eh? did you say 'best room,' Jem?"

"Aye! aye!"

"Then come in out of the rain, Jem," said Pip, in some degree consoled; "best room, eh? My dear, hand Jem the whisky-and-water, if you please. Thank you!"

Daft Jem is wandering vaguely into the room; but Mrs. Pip thrusts the glass of toddy into his face with an air that brings him up short; so he drips and drinks in the hall, and stares vacantly at the fire he may not approach.

"Yes, Sir!" continues Daft Jem, whose recollection the unexpected refreshment seemed to revive; "and you are to take care you don't go into the pond, 'cause the road is flooded and the palins is washed away; and John Smock, landlord, said as how he'd have sent the light cart, only Bill borrowed it to fetch home his wurzel. Your honour knows Bill; everybody

knows Bill, 'cause he's double-jointed—and he ain't come back yet. People do say he be washed away and drownded; but that can't be, you know, 'cause he'd swim like he did when he fetched that there span'el out o' the water, as has its tail tied in a bow, and —"

"'Best room!'" murmurs Pip to himself, not listening to Daft Jem's discourse: "so it ought to be, on such a night. Here, Jem, go and saddle the pony."

"Yes, Sir," says Jem; "I told John Smock, landlord, that you'd come on the pony, and I'm to run alongside with a lantern. Oh! I shall go as fast as him; I knows the little long-tailed bay; ten mile an hour without the spur!"

It does not take long either to immerge Doctor Pip in a couple of overcoats, or to drag the pony saddled into the beating weather, where he stands with his ears flattened on his neck by the rain, and his coat glistening like a looking-glass.

The Doctor mounts; the pony makes a feeble effort to prick his ears, but unavailingly; Daft Jem, with his lantern in one hand, grasps the rein with the other, and they hurry along the road: that is to say, as fast as the storm

permits; for the driving sleet cuts like a razor, the wind beats so hard in their teeth, that in its most wrathful gusts it seems as a wall against which they might lean for support. The meadows by the river side, where the osiers grow, are now blended by the flood with the stream itself; and boats, broken from their moorings, float far adrift to inland lanes and cottage doors. The pony sometimes stops and trembles as the light of the lantern shows at intervals some gate-post or other unusual object scudding by. Doctor Pip himself would possibly be beaten back were it not for Daft Jem's assurance that it was the "best room."

Splashing, struggling, stumbling on doggedly, they reach the roadside inn at last. The Doctor descends, shakes off the coats and the rain, and fortified by a glass of something which John Smock, landlord, had prepared in readiness, he ascends to the sick chamber.

Stretched upon the bed he found the figure of a woman, motionless and apparently insensible. Her hands were clasped convulsively, one of them hidden in her bosom; her apparel, once costly, was now ragged—not with age, but, as it appeared, with travel—and its colours

were distained into wild confusion; over the pillow floated hair as black as night, in ebony waves; her eyes were closed, but fringed by long lashes, whose darkness made the skin over which they depended seem of ivory whiteness. For long minutes her breathing was so hushed that life seemed to have fled. As Doctor Pip, however, opened the eyes and passed the light before them, she moved, and a long sad sigh escaped from her bosom, the heaving, aching token of many sorrows in its sound; and she began to mutter—

"A river gliding by overhanging branches silently—fishermen in the stream—garden gate—my child!"—and then the hand in her bosom was clasped more firmly than before.

"She's quiet enough now," said the landlord's wife, who entered the room, "poor lady! but she did go on awful at first. I was too frightened to go to sleep. She came late in the evening, just as the storm began, and asked for a room, and then lay down on the bed, clasping her hands and moaning!"

"Did she say nothing?" asked the Doctor.

"Nothing but what she said just now," re-

plied the landlady, who was a very picture of homely rustic comeliness; "nothing but the same mutterings about her child!"

Daft Jem has wandered into the room among the rest; and now, leaning upon the staff he always bore, he stares bewildered at the figure before them.

"Why!" he says, "that be her as is always by the river side a-watching the houses so close. 'Here,' she says to me 'tother day, 'here's some money for you; now walk with me, and tell me who lives here and who lives there!' and so I did for about ten mile from this; but at last we sat down together to rest, for she walked as fast as I did, and I fell a-napping; and when I roused, she were gone!"

Still the hand clasped in her bosom!

She moved: her eyes opened: a slight foam oozed through her purpled lips: she was about to rise, and in a few moments more would have been in a fit; but the Doctor had signed to the attendants to secure her, and a vein opened in her arm gave the overstrung frame relief. She sank back, muttering, "My child!—my child!—lost!—lost for ever!"

When she had fainted or sunk into entire

repose, they opened the hand that she concealed in her bosom.

It clasped a small amulet.

None there knew that the being they looked upon, so worn in frame, so broken-hearted, so half-maddened in soul, was the once beautiful Ayesha!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day being fine, Jernıngham, who had been detained at the old hall by storm and flood, is returning to see if his cottage is still above ground; and as he passes the "Leg of Mutton," he sees Doctor Pip, and hails him accordingly.

The famous pony is at the hostel door; so the Doctor mounts, and they trot leisurely on to Greenlawn together. After the first few comments upon the tempest of the preceding night, of course Pip tells the adventure of the mysterious female in the best room. Having left her at midnight composed to slumber, he had now returned in the morning to revisit his patient. But she was gone! She had risen early and silently, it seemed, leaving money enough to pay Smock the landlord, as well as

Doctor Pip, and passed away from the village like a shadow, even as she came.

The floods were decreasing, and the river was sinking again into its natural channel; but the roads were nearly impassable from the softened mire, and accumulated obstacles floated everywhere confusedly. Thus the way was somewhat long; and Doctor Pip, whose capabilities of chattering were unlimited, beguiled the time with various converse. Before he set out that morning, he had called at the cottage, "and never," the Doctor ventured to say, "had Marie looked so charming: he was not surprised that all the world was in love with her, nor that Sir Edwin Malcolm was one of the victims."

Jerningham was rather startled at this. How had Doctor Pip, of all people in the world, gained such intelligence! Seeing possibly something perplexed in his manner, Pip pulls a newspaper from his pocket, and exhibits his authority.

The paragraph spoke vaguely, but in terms sufficiently distinct, of a gentleman, possessing one of the oldest baronetcies in Scotland, whose constant attendance at the Theatre Royal C—v—t G—d—n, and whose undis-

guised admiration of a certain popular actress, left no doubt that the lady in question would ere long become Lady M——.

The newspaper copied this *on dit* from a well-known morning journal, which quoted it from a talented evening contemporary, that had found it in an opposition weekly news (and therefore did not guarantee its truth), wherein it was inserted by "Our own Correspondent."

To follow this tissue of authorities was of course impossible. Jerningham thought of Michael Brent, of whose paragraph-making propensities he was so well aware; but the suspicion, if well grounded, was fleeting.

They pursued their journey rather thoughtfully for the last mile or two. Jerningham felt an indistinct sense, impalpable and apparently devoid of reason, that his position was unreal, that the structure he had reared was without solid foundation, and would crumble at a touch. He stopped in the broad highway, just before they reached the cottage-door, at a break in the road, whence the eye of the beholder wandered over miles of glad expanse and rich fertility. How quietly it all lay in the sunlight! No change there! Then, as ever, the cattle grazed in the shade; the farms

were busy; the village churches nestled among their trees, and pointed their quaint spires upwards to a world beyond.

To the best and the wisest it is an aching thought, this eternal mutability of mundane things. For is not the Earth our mother? and does not the lip quiver, as hour after hour, weans us from her breast? It is with bleeding heart that man turns his gaze upward to that future, whither the church spire pointeth. True the hope is there! True that there alone can the weary and heavy-laden find a lasting rest! But the travail of the journey leaves the spirit cast down, the limbs fainting by the way; and when the last agony comes, when the final cup is at the lip, the draught is not wine, but hyssop!

Another instant, and he was in the arms of Marie, and she was gazing upon him, tenderly, with her violet eyes.

Strangely enough, when the first happy transports of their meeting were over, she handed him a letter with a capacious seal. He opened it, and found an invitation for himself and Marie to a morning party at the country-house of Sir Edwin Malcolm. Owing to his absence, the letter had lain there several days,

and it happened that this was the very day of the *fête*.

After the newspaper paragraph, Jerningham was not the least surprised at the invitation; nor, indeed, would he have been so otherwise. The fame he had acquired from his late work was exactly of that kind which, although it did not bring him profit of a pecuniary nature, perpetually caused his society to be sought by people of rank and intellect. He was a lion in many an exclusive *coterie*.

Jerningham determined to go upon the present occasion; and (without saying anything about the newspaper report) he persuaded Marie to accompany him. It was not just to hide her from the world she was so fitted to grace; and, if Sir Edwin Malcolm's attentions grew so marked as to excite comment, it was for *him*, her self-constituted guardian, to ask a fitting explanation, and decide upon her fate. He knew that no inducement of any kind, no offer, however dazzling, would cause her to abandon him, or even to swerve in thought a single instant from the love she bore him. But was he to take advantage of this sublime sacrifice? Had he not told her often of the

pride he felt in guiding her footsteps? and should he not lead her upward still?

He patted her cheek gently, as she clung beside him, and kissed her forehead; and ere mid-day was passed, they were rolling along to the residence of Sir Edwin, which, as the reader will remember, was not far from Greenlawn, on the outskirts of that village where Marie made her first *début* upon a country stage. His *show* place was in Scotland; but this was a mere collateral appurtenance, that had fallen casually into the family, and it was called The Grange.

It was a curious old building, apparently almost in ruin, judging from the exterior; but its chief apartments were still habitable, and exhibited all their olden state. The wings appeared to have been added from time to time, to suit unknown contingencies or pressing requirements of space, as the architecture varied everywhere: there was a specimen of well-nigh every taste and character that has ruled since the Norman conquest. In the middle ages it had been a monastery, as the long rafterless cloisters testified; and in their narrow, cold resorts, the owl now glared; the

bat made his nest all stilly, where once the holy fathers had paced the hours away—in saintly meditation some, and others in fruitless inanition. There was a small chapel: the altar was fresh as when it first echoed a prayer, lit through the dim religious light of coloured glass; and in a conspicuous spot, near a picture of the Virgin Mother, was a tablet in memory of an abbess of great sanctity, whose ashes slumbered below. She had been wealthy in her day, and none had left her porch without food and blessing. There the weary pilgrim had doffed his sandal shoon and scollop-shell; there the abbot, journeying by, had paused to rest; thither the ordinary traveller had hastened, to find a homely but safe repose, and bread and wine and God-speed! on the morrow.

Sir Edwin had turned the chapel into a smoking-room for summer-time, because it was so cool, and not far from the refectory where he dined. Sir Edwin had no imagination; his ideas were entirely practical: as a Manchester man he would have been especially successful.

Upon alighting, Jerningham and Marie

were ushered through a crowd of guests, who thronged every part of the mansion. The billiard-tables, racket ground, and pistol-gallery attracted some of Sir Edwin's own particular friends; but they found the host in the saloon, doing the honours of his house—with something of *mauvaise honte*, it is true, yet still not ungracefully, and surrounded by ladies belonging to the neighbouring county families. The Lady Janes of society do not stumble over ten thousand a-year every day; and when they do, they are so much at ease; there are no mammas frowning at the flirtation over a fan, no brothers to tease them for talking on the staircase (instead of dancing) with a younger son! That ten thousand a-year has a magic moonlight effect on terrestrial objects; it softens every asperity, it ameliorates turbaned mothers, it acts magnet-like on Lady Janes.

No sooner, however, did Sir Edwin catch a glimpse of the new arrivals, than with a sudden dash he broke through the aristocratic phalanx that surrounded him, and advanced to meet his welcome guests. The Lady Janes little knew the truth, or they would have regarded their rival with more attention.

Marie looked very beautiful; and when Sir Edwin bent before her, his was the humble, hers was the lofty mien.

He thanked them with cordial frankness for visiting him without ceremony; and while he was complimenting Jerningham upon the new book, and a whisper was gradually passing round that Marie was the celebrated actress whose *début* had made so much sensation, the announcement of luncheon took the assembled party to the refectory, where a handsome banquet was prepared.

To the astonishment of all, Sir Edwin gave his arm to Marie; while Jerningham was carried off by Dick Raven, who declined to leave him on any terms, but insisted on sitting beside him during the repast, and knowing his opinions on every important event, not forgetting the odds on the next Derby.

Sir Edwin's life had been rather erratic since his advent to the title. What with races and prize fights, jockeys and *danseuses* (to tell the truth, the Northumberland Nipper and the Bedford Buck were in the house then, rather stiff in their best clothes, with their trowsers very tight, and their hair combed very straight), Sir Edwin had not seen much of his neigh-

bours. The present event was hailed as an omen of approaching improvement. Every one was gay: the gentlemen were content with things as they stood; the ladies, no less satisfied then and there, had the additional stimulus of a prospective bliss.

If any of the monks were hovering about their old dwelling-place in ghostly guise, they might have been startled at the bang of champagne, the rapid repartee, the vivid life that soon echoed around; and so possibly might have been the sainted abbess whom Dick Raven irreverently called The Seneschale, and Sir Edwin The old girl in Grey.

When the repast was over, some of the more thoughtless youth went to the chapel, and smoked cigars under her saintly nose; others suggested archery to the ladies, and carried them off to the grounds: a few, who had budding love affairs on hand, lost themselves in the shrubberies, and mingled sentiment and winter roses.

Sir Edwin has led Marie away alone: champagne and excitement have emboldened him. He sits beside her, with the pride of his ancestors on his lip and in his eye; no longer tremulous, but proud as should be the heir of

the oldest baronetcy in ——, &c. He did not know he had so many friends at his beck and bidding. He has felt his power!

Marie speaks, and he is tamed again in an instant. He is not so bold as he thought! She admires a worn old figure in a niche before them—a friar in his weeds, praying barefooted.

"I wish you would take him," exclaimed Sir Edwin, bursting out at last.

"The friar?" asked Marie, laughing.

"Yes; the friar, and the abbess, and all the rest," continued Sir Edwin, speaking very fast, lest his courage should fail.

Marie rose, and was about to depart.

"Now, do stay and hear me!" said the Baronet, detaining her hand until she sat down beside him again, in order to release it: "I know I'm not good enough for you, but all I have is yours; and I'll bid good-bye to the racers and the ring, and I'll keep up the establishments all regular, you know; and I *do* love and admire you—upon my soul I do! so now, if you'll accept the friar, and the abbess, and ten thousand a-year—and—and—*me!* why, here we are, and upon my soul I shall be the happiest man alive!"

She again essayed to rise, but now she was deadly cold! Every word to which she listened seemed an insult; yet dared she not own why.

"I'd no right to speak when we were in the midst of so many people," faltered Sir Edwin; "but I didn't know when we might meet again; and now don't refuse *us*—I mean the friar, and the abbess, and *me*—without thinking of it, you know. I don't want an answer yet; but you shall tell me when you please whether and when you will be Lady Malcolm: *I'm not involved!*"

This was not devoid of something that might have touched an ordinary heart, though the matter was disjointed and the manner ludicrous. But, after other accents, how strangely these grated on her ear!

Suddenly some of the guests came exploring through the cloister: their hearty laughter broke the spell that had chained her to the seat. Among them was Jerningham. She rose with dignity, took his arm, bowed to Sir Edwin, and hurried away.

When they were seated in the carriage, she burst into a passionate flood of tears that she could not restrain, and told him all.

Jerningham felt sorrowful and yet relieved.

At least some of his fears were dispelled. No dishonour, such as he had for a moment anticipated, had sullied her pure mind with the proposal of wrong. The offer was prompted by a spirit noble and generous. He pointed out to her all the advantages she would reap from such an alliance. Her only reply was the same passionate weeping.

When they had reached home, and she had retired to her couch, and sobbed herself to sleep, Jerningham sat down, buried his head in his hands, and was lost in reverie. Then he seized pen and paper, and wrote to Lord Haverdale. He told him Marie's history, all their poverty together, and all their fervent love. He besought him to give his consent to their union, to make them happy. As soon as the lines were traced he hurried to Marie, to read them to her ere they were despatched. She clasped her hands with hysteric joy. And she wept still, but it was with happiness now!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE river has shrunk into its bed, the lanes of Greenlawn are solid once more, the meadows are no longer so steeped in flood that the farmer cannot tell where his own land ends and his neighbour's begins, nor can he row in a Thames wherry from his hay-stacks to his granaries; but the evil has not all departed.

From the long sweep of lowland has risen a thick miasma, bearing sickness to the village in every breath, and enveloping it as in a shroud; from the tall dank grass, from the entangled osier beds, from the willow copse, from the haunted glen, from the church-yard with its pregnant clay, from the parson's well-kept garden, from the hill-side where the old moss-covered oak-trees grow—from each, from all, rises the deadly vaporous poison.

Woe! to the poor.

Woe! to those that lack food and clothing.

Woe! to that sinner in the village of Greenlawn, whose attic, seldom cleansed, looks down upon some loathsome sty, some fœtid dunghill that is never cleansed at all.

There shall the fever revel; *there* doth typhus make itself perfectly at home!

Day by day hard-working wives grow pale; unclad children languish; husbands, who in other times would have laughed such fears to scorn, and drunk a week's wages contemptuously away, now look on stupidly, with a vacant stare, the senses so drowned with horror that there is no need to steep them in gin!

When the village is decimated, and not till then, Parson Fribble yields to the pressure from without.

Parson Fribble scorned to be convinced. Doctor Pip may talk as he will of ventilation, of white-washed rooms, of pure food, of proper clothing; he may prove all he asserts incontrovertibly.

Parson Fribble knows better! *He* knows —saintly seer in the decrees of Providence!— he knows that Greenlawn is given up to the Evil One. He knew it all along, when Wednesday Evening Meetings were only attended by the deaf and dumb gentleman (a decayed

boot-maker from the almshouse) and Miss Flutter (an old maid, formerly alluded to by Doctor Pip, who had an affection in the throat, and was obliged to suck an orange to moisten it while the hymn was given out)—a worthy audience when apostolic Fribble was eloquent! He knew it when the mission to Timbuctoo was set forth at Greenlawn, when that interesting native Rum-Mug implored their aid in a violent perspiration and broken African, and when the subscription only amounted to six shillings and sixpence, whereof two half-crowns were bad! He knew it when the frozen-out gardeners, instead of calling upon *him* at Christmas time for tracts, for advice, for gruel, actually went to The Villa and received roast beef and beer, and, being hungry, preferred it! *He!*—saintly seer!—had known it all along.

But while he yields unwillingly to tolerance and common sense, Jerningham and Marie, with the aid of Doctor Pip, are gradually undermining the enemy, as far as their limited power can reach. The Parson teaches in vain that the money they receive, like the wealth of the false enchanter, will turn to paper counters, and avail them nothing. He explains in holy

moanings that the food they bear from the dwelling of the play-house woman—a very Jezebel—will not feed their bodies, but condemn their souls.

The poor, benighted, blinded as they are, know whose hand is ever raised to save, whose lips are ever ready to console; when the dark curls of Marie hang over the couch, there is blessing in her breath; when the form of the pale-browed author fills their thresholds, courage and plenty glad the hearth again.

By degrees reason dawns, filth and foulness are cleansed away, and the fever ceases, just as if Wednesday Evening Meetings had become an unparalleled attraction, and Rum-Mug had never known a bad half-crown.

Long sleepless nights, however, and gloomy days, during the spread of the epidemic at Greenlawn, had worked their effect at last upon the earnest lovers. For some time they languished themselves, not so much from disease as from exhaustion, and early one morning Revel came down to the cottage to see how they were.

"'Hold thee still!'" he said to Jerningham, when he had heard the real state of the case, and finished his breakfast, "'hold thee still;

things bad begun make worse themselves with ill'—always go to Shakespere! Now, do you know what would do you good, Ned, and the Violet-eye as well?"

"Pray you, enlighten me!"

"We once vowed to make a pilgrimage."

"Then, like the cock to Æsculapius, it must be paid!"

"To the old church porch, where we sat with Daft Jem, and ate our first free meal, when we ran away from school!"

"Capital!" exclaimed Jerningham.

"Fresh life and fresh air in the very thought," said Marie; "I feel better already."

"But we ought to have Daft Jem," added Jerningham.

"He is down-stairs, in a state of bread and cheese," laughed Revel; "I found him near the river side!"

"Indeed!" said Marie, "he seems to be always there now!"

Some luncheon and a bottle or two of beer and wine were stowed away in the back of Jerningham's phaeton, and they were quickly on the road; Daft Jem, who had declined scornfully to ride, running along, as usual, beside the horse's head.

Revel was so full of kindness about Marie, and so earnest about her success upon the stage, that they could scarcely find time to tell all they had to say; and then there were all sorts of plans to talk over with Jerningham about new plays, and infinite varieties of anecdote about the late book, which Revel religiously treasured up. As they approached the scene of their boyish exploit, they descended from the carriage, and walked near Daft Jem hand in hand beside it.

Hand in hand, like brothers!

How many strange vicissitudes had they not known since they passed that wicket they are passing now! They had passed it first in the early flush of boyhood, in the glory of cheeks embrowned by health and cricket, in the beauty of the unwrinkled brow and the wreathed hair. The battle of life has marked them since, not with dishonourable scars, but with such lines as the mariner brings from a stormy voyage, or the warrior from a hard campaign.

Daft Jem, having disposed of the carriage, laid out the viands in the old church porch just as he had done before. *He* looks exactly the same age, too; nobody knew how old he

was; he appeared not to know himself. He said something that caused them to question him upon the subject; but they could draw no conclusion from his rambling incoherence.

In spite of the season, the scene was fair as ever. The tombs of the church-yard were still decked with their trailing roses, the windows were covered with honeysuckle as of old. To make it complete, Marie grew weary with weakness, and the church door being open, they led her in and conducted her to the same well-curtained pew where they had slumbered themselves, and she sank asleep there too beneath the escutcheon, whose red cross told of the dead Crusader in Palestine.

When Jerningham and Revel had left the homely fare, Daft Jem began to assuage his appetite, and grew talkative as he concluded.

"Yes!" he said, "it's a mortal while since I sat here with your honours afore; it were summer-time then!"

"How long had you known the village before that?" asked Revel.

"Why! a matter o' seven year; ah! seven year exact at that very time o' June when I met your honours a-running away from school. I knowed a'rterwards you'd slipped it, 'cos the

Doctor come and asked me, knowing I were about a good deal, and I sent 'un wrong!"

"Poor old Vandersplutter, let us hope the Schnapps consoled him!" laughed Jerningham.

"Seven year that very month o' June," continued Daft Jem, "and I remembers it, 'cos I'd been a-walking a day or two with a man in livery as had charge of a little child. Well, we stopped here, for he were ill, and he went and stayed down there at the inn, and I slept here in the porch. I don't know what he were bad of; but days went on, and at last the little girl came and played in the churchyard, and made garlands of them roses as hangs round the tombs, and I watched her. I loved that child, I did; she were so gentle and pretty. At last the man, as had charge on her, died; but she were too young, you know, to understand that, and she come and played along o' me just the same. A'rter the funeral—he was buried somewheres here—some gen'leman as passed hee'rd as the little girl were a foundling, and took her with 'un to Lunnun, and mortal sorry I were. They went away too fast in a po'chay, or I'd a' followed, if on'y to know where the little 'un had hid her pretty face, so as I might peep in

sometimes of a night when the lamps was lit!"

"Could you repeat that all over again another time?" asked Jerningham anxiously and hurriedly.

"Aye! aye!" replied Daft Jem, "I knows it by heart; shall I tell your honour now?"

"No, no! not now!" said Jerningham. "Was no relic left of the man?"

"He spent all he had while he were ill; and he got delirious tremendous, and couldn't tell no one what was to be done, and so he died!"

"And you have nothing belonging to the child either?" said Jerningham, more agitated than ever.

Daft Jem looked round to see if there were any listener near, and then at his questioner with that suspicious shrewdness peculiar to the half-witted.

"I don't mind a tellin' *you!*" he said at last, in a low tone, "I *have* —"

"What?"

"A handkercher' as she wore round her neck; I took it on the sly, when I he'erd how she were a-going away!"

"And you have it still?" faltered Jerningham.

"I hadn't no place to put it in," said Daft Jem, "'cos I were always a-going about, so I buried it!"

"Where?"

"Oh! it's there now," said Daft Jem, with a cunning look, evading the question; "I knows it's there, 'cos I often passes to see if the stones is moved; and when I finds 'em as they was, then I feels as happy as if I'd seen *her* again, and her eyes so large and blue!"

Daft Jem seemed from his manner to figure her in his mind, not as she would be, if alive, but still a child, playing in the church-yard.

"Listen, Jem!" said Jerningham, "do you see this?"

He showed him a piece of gold.

"Aye! aye!" answered Jem, staring vacantly.

"When you bring me that handkerchief, I will give you five of them!"

Daft Jem fell back.

"It's a weary way from here!" he replied, when he recovered his breath, "but I could do it in three days, back to the cottage!"

"In three days, then, the five guineas are yours!"

Daft Jem flourished his staff, leaped over the church-yard wall, and disappeared with the fleetness of a deer!

CHAPTER XIX.

Sir Edwin Malcolm being still in the country, with no one to console him but the figure of the old abbess, he has sent for Dick Raven again, and the bosom friends are once more *téte-à-téte*.

It is a crisp morning, with more of spring than winter in its breath; and breakfast has been despatched summarily, for Sir Edwin's head-keeper has sent up word that there are some woodcocks in the wood by the river-side.

So guns are lying on the table; shot-belts and powder-flasks are scattered here and there; and Sir Edwin's favourite spaniel is spread before the fire, and rises ever and anon to intimate his presence by insinuating his nose into his master's hand. Leda, the pointer, becoming impatient, indulges occasionally in a slight scratch upon the door; and Bitch, the little terrier, whose mind is bent on rabbits,

finds the two friends so dilatory that he is half disposed to start without them, and work on his own account.

Dick Raven, who hates walking, would rather spend the morning in the billiard-room, but he does not mention it on any account. On the contrary, his boots are two inches thick, and his plaid shooting-suit is of a pattern any number of inches wide; he is a sportsman cap-à-pied according to the fashion-book of that month. Sir Edwin laughs in his heart at the idea of *his* shooting anything; but he is too lovesick to joke on the subject.

His parting observation (gun in hand) is a remonstrance:

"'Pon my soul, Dick!" said Sir Edwin, "you're a cold-blooded animal—leathern-mouthed like a barbel."

"Or my old grey mare," replied Dick; "just the same! But then look at her—how well she wears! can't help it—never tires herself; takes the world easily, like a sensible old girl as she is; she won't be hurried—no more will Dick Raven!"

"Ah!" said Sir Edwin, "you were never in love."

"Wrong again!" answered Dick.

"Never knew an angel like—"

"Like who? the last angel? or the last but one?—pooh! pooh!" continued Dick: "I knew houris by the dozen; but angels have wings, and one by one they flew away!"

Sir Edwin can only sigh sentimentally at such depravity.

"Yes, I was in love once!" added Dick Raven, pensive for a second, playing vacantly and absently with his gun; "when I was only eighteen, down in Scotland, deer-stalking. *I* had youth, a merry tongue, a light heart, and the favour of the lady to boot; *but* the neighbouring laird had all these, and five thousand broad acres in a ring-fence besides! Not the least occasion to tell the result. Her father was a strict old Presbyterian, who loved his religion well, his whiskey better, but best of all a game at cribbage. It was one Saturday night—I remember it well—nearly twenty years since, when I determined to propose. Mary (sweet old name!) had left us alone, on purpose. Well, I let the old gentleman win every game, so that he might be in good humour; and never was any one so delighted. Whisky, snuff, and cribbage aided my eloquence, and he owned at last I was 'a cannie

boy,' when the clock struck twelve, and he dropped his hand, and said, 'We must no talk o' profane things o' the Lord's Day!' The laird met him and Mary coming from church the next morning, and they were married a month after. Since then," concluded Dick, "I have loved nothing, except perhaps a breakfast of champagne and *pâté de fois gras!*"

"Carriage at the door, Sir!" said the footman entering; and so ended Dick Raven's love-tale, which, evanescent as it seemed, and trifling as was the tone in which he alluded to it, still showed that every heart, no matter how encrusted with worldliness, has yet some under-current that flows from a purer spring —some dream of a happiness that should have been in vanished years, but never was. No man ever passed through life without being in love *once*.

The lover that hath been, and the lover that is, pack themselves snugly; dogs, guns, and servants are stowed away, and off they go to the copse. As the thorough-bred ponies whirl the carriage along, Sir Edwin's spirits improve; and, with a glance at Dick Raven's new shooting suit, he offers to bet his friend a

guinea on each shot. Dick never bets; he avoids it on principle; he has betted in a friendly way with so many boys whose parents objected to pay; but as that *contretemps* cannot extend to Sir Edwin, he does not mind losing a ten-pound note on the present occasion.

When they descend, and enter the wood, and the keepers begin to beat, Dick is not so clumsy as might be expected. The first bird rose to Sir Edwin, and was killed, of course.

"A guinea to me, Dick!" he said.

"All right!—buy the apple fritters!" and Dick moved through the thicket, while Sir Edwin reloaded.

A whirr! a cry from the keeper! bang! bang! and a brace were laid at Dick's feet.

"Killed right and left!" exclaimed Dick; "how very singular! Two guineas to *me!* Quite an accident!"

It was observable with respect to Dick Raven that he never won even a shilling at billiards, or anything else, without attributing it entirely to luck. He lived on accidents in a great measure. He was an accident himself.

When they got through the copse, instead of losing a ten-pound note, he had exactly won

that sum, and his mind was engaged in ignoble calculations as to the relative propriety of paying his landlady or his laundress. A movement on the part of Sir Edwin dispelled his dreams. Their path had brought them to the river-side, and there stood Edward Jerningham fishing for pike, and Marie with him, her glorious beauty flushed into more than ordinary brilliancy by exercise and sunlight.

It was an awkward meeting; but Sir Edwin was so visibly disturbed that Jerningham recovered at once, and advancing towards the baronet, extended his hand, and thus placed them all at ease.

Of course, after meeting in this way, Sir Edwin would not hear of a separation. He insisted that they should accompany him back to the Grange; and Jerningham and Marie were equally determined to carry Sir Edwin and Mr. Raven to the humble hospitality of the cottage.

If woodcock is something the worse for being cooked as soon as killed, still pike is all the better. The game-bag and the fish-basket were united, and so were Jerningham and his new guests in the baronet's carriage, which was not long wafting them back to Greenlawn.

There was no theatre that night.

The afternoon passed, the dinner came and went, and while Lord Haverdale's rich claret circulated round the table, guest after guest dropped in by chance, until the cottage echoed with many a pleasant voice.

Sir Edwin was not prepared for the unostentatious but quiet elegance which pervaded the home of Edward Jerningham. He saw everywhere the evidences of that unobtrusive refinement that can only be shed around a dwelling by a woman of gentle mind and faultless taste. Marie was everywhere, in a thousand fairy shapes. Her drawings were on the walls; her image was blended in every graceful form that adorned their home; and then she sang, and poor Sir Edwin, so far gone already, sunk fathoms deeper still in love. What a magic he thought would such charms shed around the dull old Grange! He could see the crumbling walls light up in her presence, like a quiet sea blushing rosily in the sunrise.

The evening was waning on, when Marie opened the garden-window, and stepped, followed by Sir Edwin, out of the heated room into the tranquil starlight.

He was about to speak to her once more, while they moved down the lawn towards the river, upon the subject that occupied his thoughts. But as they reached the slight railing that overlooked the water, a dark figure stood on the path before them, and he remained silent.

It was a female, carelessly attired, but closely veiled.

"The player!" she said, in a low clear tone, gazing at Marie, as they reached the spot where she stood—"the river-fishermen in the stream! Yes! it might be such a place, and such a form. I would speak with you, lady! when may I find you alone?"

"I have nothing to hide," said Marie: "speak now!"

"And deem you all the world so guileless?" asked poor Ayesha, for it was she.

"To-morrow then!" said Marie coldly.

"Aye! to-morrow!" echoed Ayesha; "the little I shall say will soon be said. Fear not! you may pity me, since I beg nothing."

"Confound her!" muttered Sir Edwin to himself, impatient at the interruption.

Suddenly Marie started. A letter was

placed in her hand, addressed to Edward Jerningham.

No more thought of Sir Edwin Malcolm! She knew from the post-mark that the missive was from France; she felt that it contained her destiny.

CHAPTER XX.

MIDNIGHT at the cottage. The guests have departed. Marie is in her chamber; not retired thither to rest, but to pace the floor with agitated steps, to listen for his footfall with hushed breath, to tremble at every sound. In the deserted dining-room the lights burn still, the fire is settled into a steady glow: from the scattered chairs seem to echo again the voices of those who occupied them but half-an-hour since. But Jerningham stands there alone—pale, motionless; a look of age upon his forehead, and a new furrow upon his cheek, that had not been there before. Beside him the opened letter. He snatched it from the table, and perused it again. Lord Haverdale wrote with more kindness than usual in his stately style. He spoke of Parisian life, of Jerningham Hall, and hinted at the interest that he felt in the welfare of his

protegé. It was only in a casual way that he concluded by alluding to the request of Jerningham. He seemed to treat it as a joke—a passing fancy, a phantom engendered by a lonely country existence. He advised him to travel again for a time; to make money no consideration, but draw for what he required; and banish his present phantasy as something which, if realized, would deprive his guardian of any further solicitude in his career.

Jerningham knew Lord Haverdale too well to doubt what this meant. While he read, he could hear the cold cynical voice ringing in his ear, and bidding him choose between Marie and a prosperous future—between Love and Ambition.

In a postscript were a few kind lines from Madame de Méranie :—

"MONSIEUR MON AMI,—

"I could not allow the letter of milord to go away without a single word as a *bon souvenir*. I have not forgotten the past. Your dear father gave me welcome at his *château* once, when France and her children were unhappy. I knew you then in your cradle, when your sweet sainted mother was near, she who loved you so well; she is with the angels! I know you now that you are famous, and I love you always for *her* sake. If I have ever any influence with milord, it

is exercised to promote your happiness. I feel sure that the woman of whom you tell is worthy, or she would not possess your love. But, *mon ami!* we all are compelled to make sacrifices in this world: in such sacrifices I lost my youth; but I know NOW that I was right. And I think you will see it too—you will be better and happier hereafter. I have no right to address you thus; but I speak the true sentiments of my heart. *You* have no parent—*I* have no child; think, then, that it is a mother who speaks. I write so ill English that you will scarcely follow these disjointed phrases; but they are meant in sincerity, '*et comme douces paroles de tendresse!*' Accept them thus; and when all this is past, and you are once more happy, write to your French friend—mother, if you will—who is often thinking of you when you are far away.

"LOUISE DE MERANIE.

"*Faubourg St. Germain.*"

These simple, unaffected words were so like the graceful Frenchwoman, that *her* sweet soft voice seemed NOW to echo in his heart. The visions of the Past which she had invoked melted Jerningham until his overwrought bosom heaved heavily, and a single tear, wrung out in travail and bitterness, coursed slowly down his cheek. The letter fell from his hand upon the table again. He looked upon the cottage-walls, upon every evidence of his companionship with Marie that lay around.

It all appeared dim, faded, gone! His limbs tottered, a cold sweat broke out upon his pallid brow, his eyes began to swim, and everything grew indistinct—he would have fallen. Near his hand was a capacious silver goblet, that the art of Benvenuto Cellini had covered with quaint figures and flower-wreaths three hundred years before. He emptied the claret jug into it, drank off the restoring draught, and hurried from the house. Whither? Not to the river-side, where they had spent so many happy hours; not to the hill overlooking broad and fertile lands, bathed in starlight now, where they had sat and read in summer time; not to the pleasant fields where the crows were ever chattering, where children gambolled merrily in June when the hay was cut, and the brown husbandman was abroad; but to the lonely meadow, where the tall trees, waving gloomily in the wind, made a tomb-like shade below, a sepulchral music above. He had often wandered there before, during the hours of night, to listen to the solemn Æolian sounds that the branches gave forth as the breezes swept them. What once had been a song, hallowed by darkness, was now a dirge, deepened by despair. The

branches alternately shrieked and sobbed, then cracked and splintered like a good ship's mast when the white squall booms by; and the few seared leaves that winter had left, came sailing to the ground, parched and withered, like his hopes. Up and down he wandered along the dreary avenue, hour after hour, recalling every recollection of the past life they had led together. Many things that he had forgotten rose up then, endearing her still more to his memory. He had been so proud of her beauty, so devoted to her genius, and the work was all his own. Could he abandon it now? Could the sculptor break the figure that he had called to life, and make it once more a mere block of unmeaning marble! Could the painter abandon his toil, or the musician his minstrelsy! And should Love yield to Ambition, and Jerningham quit Marie!

No! with *her* he will struggle on. No matter what sacrifices may arise, they will be sweet in her society: her love will soothe him for all. He listens no more to the sighing branches that seem to sob out "Too late:" he feels strengthened in body as well as mind by this firm resolve.

At length he leaves the avenue, which is still dark

within, he finds the first rays of daylight dawning in the east: his heart grows light as he hastens to the cottage. On approaching it, he found the door open. He wondered whether he had left it so! He hastened to her chamber: it was empty. Thrilled with agitation, he rang the bells and summoned the servants; but they knew nothing. They heard *him* leave the house; but they were accustomed to such absences, and had retired to rest. Suddenly a thought flashed across Jerningham's brain like fire—the letter! He hastened to the dining-room, where he had left it so inadvertently, and his worst fears were confirmed: he found there a sealed packet. Upon tearing it open he discovered the letter from Lord Haverdale, enclosed in another from Marie.

"Forgive me, my own Edward" (she wrote), "for reading this; but I was a woman, and unhappy. God knows how I have loved you, and love you still! I owe you too much already. Shall I bring misery to your hearth; shall I make your home a cell, where no joy ever enters, and rob *you* of happiness, in the vain belief that it would ensure my own? No; my affection for you is too deep.

"Do not follow me. When Fate has placed a barrier between us that we cannot pass, I will see you

again. If I may not then love you as I have done—ah, how fervently!—I will love you in your fame! No glory you may achieve but will make me proud; no happiness but will make me glad! The tears that stain this sheet are not so very bitter, for I know that I am right. God bless you, my darling Edward! I kiss your portrait and your dear curls ere I depart. Farewell!"

Jerningham had no sooner read "Farewell!" than he stared wildly around: he tried to call upon the servants, who stood near, to get his horse; but his voice was gone! his heart seemed to snap asunder, as if cleft by a poignard—blood started from between his purple lips, from his cold distorted nostril. He fell down insensible!

CHAPTER XXI.

"Not at home, I tell you!" said Jerningham's man-servant, in reply to a summons at the bell next morning.

"Not at home!" exclaimed a female voice. "The lady—she promised to see me to-day."

"Gone away on a visit," said the man, rubbing his eyes. He had been up all night, and was sleepy, but much too *tactique*, notwithstanding, to let any one know that there was a screw loose. He had lived in "regular families," and felt his honour as much involved in a cottage as in an establishment in Piccadilly. His master's honour was his own.

"And the gentleman?" said the female, who, as the reader will divine, was Ayesha.

"He's ill a-bed," answered the man, "and the doctor's a-watching him; so you can't see anybody."

Ayesha's eyes fell; her arms sank beside her; she looked the picture of silent despair. The anger that had formerly consumed her frame seemed now burnt out; the absorbing pursuit in which she was engaged had worn her down to a stolid calm. Perhaps her intellects were gradually becoming affected by her brooding, lonely existence. She turned away, sighing.

"Here, wait a minute!" said the man, touched by her resignation. "The bottles is still out; have a glass of cure-a-sore?"

She paused, and stared vacantly, while he took the spirit-flask from a sideboard.

"Mary-skin-o, or eau-de-vie?" he continued, as she shook her head. "It's all here. We had people last night to dinner, and we're not put to-rights yet. Ah, I see—call again."

Ayesha moves away; and John, who had been devoting his attention for the last hour or two to the brandy-bottle, now sits down, and thinks he will console himself with cure-a-sore. If the household is to be broken up, he—John—may as well make much of himself while it lasts.

Doctor Pip, ensconced on a sofa by the bedside, never leaves his patient for an instant.

But the malady defies his skill. He cannot minister to a mind diseased. Through long days and nights Jerningham raved in delirium. Then the intellect, from being a chaos, became a blank. He sank into imbecility. The reaction bowed him to the dust He was seized with the fever prevalent at Greenlawn, and for weeks life trembled in the balance. The parson hinted that it was a judgment, but did not clearly explain for what. Youth, however, is elastic: the crisis passed, and left him living.

It was a pleasant spring-morning when the change took place. After a long, long sleep, as silent as death, he woke. The oppression had left his brain. He sat up in bed—a skeleton in frame—and declared he was well. Tears coursed down his cheeks; but they left him calm, and did him good. He conversed awhile with Revel, who nursed him as tenderly as a woman, and with Doctor Pip, and then fell asleep again. These protracted slumbers restored his frame more than human skill could do. By degrees, he quitted the chamber, and sat down below in the dining-room overlooking the river. His old friends gathered round him sometimes during the day, to cheer him, and talked to him of past times. Then came fish-

ing parties, and pleasant excursions in his sailing-boat with Revel; and gradually he resumed his former habits of study.

One day—it was at breakfast-time—his colour, returning now, waned for an instant to its former pallor. A newspaper he was reading sank from his grasp.

"The marriage," it said, "which we stated was on the *tapis* between Sir Edwin Malcolm and the beautiful *comedienne* who occupies so high a position at His Majesty's Theatre Covent-garden was yesterday celebrated in strict privacy at, &c., &c., &c. Sir Edwin and his lovely bride, after spending the honey-moon at his seat in Scotland, will proceed to Italy."

Jerningham's colour returned ere many minutes had elapsed. The bitterness of the cup had been tasted long before. He felt no other than a momentary emotion.

From that instant, he pursued his ordinary avocations with more than usual vigour. He left no moment for useless reflection—no hour unemployed. Day by day he increased in reputation and worldly wealth. He re-entered society, and became its darling; he was alike the favourite of the grave and the gay, the

young and the old, the thoughtless and the profound.

He had reached, apparently, the pinnacle of an author's wishes. Courted by all, the observed of all observers, he stood in the world of fashion a reigning star, honoured, fêted, flattered—but *alone!*

END OF SECOND BOOK.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XXII.

Lord Haverdale and Madame de Méranie are on a visit to the Prince de Condé, at the Chateau de Montmorency. It is a hunting party. Many of the English friends whom he had known while in exile are present; and, though it is late in the season, they fill the game-bags rather considerably with hares and rabbits, and partridges, grey and red. The French portion of the *chasseurs* are very great indeed — in point of accoutrements The gun, slung at the back of the shoulder by

a leathern band, looks very picturesque; the peaked hat, the painted pouch, the theatrical-brigand boots, are beautiful to look on—at starting. But, somehow, the owners are never at the right place at the right time. At the end of the day, they dilate on their feats; they prove beyond a doubt that, under any other circumstances, they would have done wonders; they are quite satisfied that their skill has been undone by their luck. But they produce small results on the whole—a few blackbirds, perhaps, with an old owl or so. One gallic nobleman, who shot an eagle, had his portrait taken with the bird in his hand, and went out no more, lest he should tarnish his laurels.

The *réunions*, however, are very pleasant, when the guests are assembled after dinner in the *salon*—as pleasant as rank and wealth can make them—for the hired singer is there to soothe the luxurious guests ever and anon into music's soft embrace. Madame de Méranie is there, with her lustrous hazel eyes, her low, sweet laugh, her faultless grace, her mellow beauty, that knows no shadow of fading. And the good old Prince!—but on *him* Time has set an arresting finger. Age is telling on him: old wounds burst out anew. Velvet may

swathe the bosom and the trembling limbs, but no warmth can restore the youthful fire that is fled. Ere long, his place will not know him; he will soon be gone.

Not soon enough, however, for foul ambition, and the intrigues of courts.

Madame de Feuchères is speaking, in a boudoir apart, to a secret agent of the Duke of Orleans.

"Is his Highness content with me?" And she glared with her serpent-eyes.

"*Mais oui*, Madame la Baronne!" was the reply. "He sends you this ring as a token of his sincerity: the diamond is pure."

"Pure, indeed!" And the eyes, in their serpent-beauty, glared again.

"One of the rarest jewels belonging to his house."

"His Highness is so good!"

"Pardon my alluding, Madame la Baronne, to such a matter twice; but the trinket has another value. It was presented to the royal ancestors of his Highness, for peculiar services: he would only have parted with it to one whom he valued deeply—to one whose attachment to his family was as profound as he knows yours to be."

"The Duke may rely upon me," answered Madame de Feuchères."

"The wishes of his Highness are well known to you?" continued the tempter.

"Perfectly."

"He has a family."

"And he is not rich," said the Baroness, taking up the sentence.

"The Prince has no child, and his wealth is a proverb in France. These far-spread lands, these chateaux in every province, these mansions in every capital—to whom should they descend, if not to the family of his good cousin of Orleans?"

The woman's face lit up for an instant from its lowering aspect, and the malignant beauty assumed an aspect of surprise.

"And is the ring to purchase *all*, without reserve?" she added, haughtily.

He saw his mistake, and recovered the ground instantly.

"His Highness will always retain enough: he cannot give too much to the being who constitutes the Prince's happiness—to the Baroness Sophia de Feuchères," was the reply; "though *that*," he added, "would matter little, as the Duke of Orleans would have the

same desire as the Prince to make everything, even hereditary wealth, subservient to your wishes."

"I shall ask nothing," she added. "*Mon Prince* has given me, this very day, the estate of St. Leu and the domain of Boissy!"

"I know it well, Madame," said the former speaker, with chagrin but half concealed: "it is a goodly revenue."

"Enough for *me*," she answered—"Here comes the Prince."

"He is very infirm."

"*I could stifle him with my finger and thumb!*"* was her reply. "Ah, *mon Prince!* we were speaking of you."

"*Chèrie*," exclaimed the Prince de Condé," hobbling up to her, to press her hand, and lean on her arm.

"We were saying how well you looked."

He sighed, but his eyes thanked her.

Lord Haverdale drew the Prince aside for an instant.

Madame de Feuchères took advantage of the interruption to leave his arm.

* Her actual words, shortly before his mysterious death.

"The will!" whispered the agent, in tones audible only to *her*: "you will urge the Prince to make it as his Highness wishes, without the delay of another week."

"Or another day," she replied. "And THEN—"

The Prince took her arm again.

Sophia de Feuchères finished the sentence with a strange glance from the serpent-eyes!

CHAPTER XXIII.

MICHAEL Brent, the purveyor of paragraphs, whose business it is to be everywhere, has contrived through Jerningham's interest with Lord Haverdale to get invited to Montmorency. "Our own correspondent" is now one of the guests of the Prince de Condé.

The political atmosphere is still rife with fever and convulsion. Charles X. is on the throne; but the sceptre trembles in his grasp; the spirit of revolution is abroad; the struggle is at hand; the monarch must either be the victim of his enemies, or trample them under foot. And he wavers!

It is the distant murmur of this coming storm that has brought "our own correspondent" to Paris. During his stay at Montmorency, he has been listening to everything. Above all, he has been seized with a magnetic attraction, not altogether pleasurable, to Madame de Feuchères.

She is of a graceful presence, but it is not

that. She is of a more than ordinary beauty, but he bows not to her charms. She has honeyed words for all, but not for him.

She heeds him not—she is too proud; so he watches without remark.

A kind of destiny throws each across the path of the other. He had heard something of the conversation in the last chapter, and he had told Lord Haverdale; he heard more now that awoke in his mind strange mysterious doubts and fears.

But all is solemnity in the château to-day; a stern repose from the dawn to the setting sun. No lounging party in the grounds; no chattering boys in the billiard-room; no gun ringing through the clear air from the preserves.

The good old Prince, secluded in strict privacy, is dreaming of the past, is praying for the lost!

A tap at the private entrance to his chamber. He knows that but *one* person dare intrude at such a time, and he bids her enter. It is Sophia de Feuchères. At first his features were unmoved from their fixed expression of sorrow; but they soon relaxed to a softer cast, as he looked upon the fairy tempter.

"Can my Prince forgive me," she said, "for entering here at such a time?"

He took her hand, and pressed it gently, silently.

"I know your griefs," she continued; "but shall I not share them?—*I* who have shared so many of your happier hours!"

"Ma Sophie!" replied the Prince, "as we descend to the tomb, we think of those who have gone thither before us—not all the old, not all the withered; but some the young, the beautiful!"

"I know it!" she said, bowing her head.

"Fourscore years have passed over me," he continued, "or well nigh fourscore, and still I linger on the threshold of time; but my thoughts to-day roll back more than twenty summers, to another era—to another life!"

The fair false head is bent still.

"I seem to live again in that time when I had a son. I see again his bright broad brow, his dauntless mien in battle, his sweet smile that never changed from the hours when he climbed my knee in childhood! My thoughts, Sophie, must be of *him* to-day—*all* of him!"

"Mon Prince!" she remonstrated.

"To age little remains but the past," he

said; "do not chide me: if I had not *you* to cheer the present, I should not live at all."

He sank back in his seat, his eyes fixed upon an ivory image of the Redeemer upon the Cross. The lamps were subdued to a mournful glow; the apartment was hung throughout with mourning drapery; only one object that might suggest other and more worldly thoughts was there—it was a sword that had been worn by his son, stained and jagged in the battle's tide. The weapon lay along the table beside his desk.

"See!" he added, after a pause, taking up a paper, on which he had been writing, "from the past, I have wandered on this sad day to the future. My son—heaven rest his soul!—is in the grave; and there I soon must be. I wish to be buried by his side, brave boy! I have written it. Let them place me in the same tomb at Vincennes!"*

She had come to talk of other things, but the hour was sad enough to overcome even

* Dans l'un des écrits du Prince de Condé, on lisait cette prière touchante:—"Je demande à être ènterré à Vincennes près de mon infortuné fils!"—*Revelations Politiques.*

her; there was something holy in the old man's grief. It was no time for vulgar barter.

The pendule struck the hour of midnight.

"Come!" he said, rising suddenly, "come with me to the chapel! the priests wait—let us pray for the dead!"

He struck a small silver alarum. The door opened, showing one or two members of his household in attendance, arrayed like himself in mourning attire, and bearing torches that threw a weird-like glimmer on all around.

He took her hand, and they moved through the long winding corridors to the chapel, where many princes of his line had offered up their orisons.

They stood upon the threshold.

The Prince advanced to a *fauteuil* that had been arranged for his devotions. He buried his head and silver locks in his hands clasped upon the prie-dieu.

But *she!*

Dared she enter?

For an instant she faltered; an instant she gazed around.

The chapel was swathed in black, from the pavement to the roof; the lamps shed a dim

spiritual light around, that made everything seem shadowy, and every kneeling figure not of earth.

Dared she enter?

Was not the temple the abode of God? Where all bow down, can *she* stand erect? Hark! the calm clear voice of the priest rings through the vaulted aisles, telling of repentance now, of forgiveness hereafter. Hark! hark! to the organ swelling everywhere, like angels' whispers, like spirit voices, like the glad chorus of the redeemed, like the rapture of the blest —and now it sinks into a dying murmur like the soul that has found repose in the presence of the most divine!

Dared she enter there, where religion dwells —where sanctifying grief has made the thoughtless holy, and cleansed the stains of the impure?

With no such emotion is the Baroness de Feuchères impressed, as she bends in outward reverence, but inward mockery, before the altar. Her momentary hesitation has passed. To *her* the ebon draperies are so much cloth; the prostrate Prince, with his holy sorrow, is an instrument to play upon; the organ tones

are music, and no more; the priests are dexterous players; the eternity of which they tell a blank.

Sophie de Feuchères dare bend before the altar, amid the just and good, with the serpent eyes cast upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE memory of the midnight masses dies away; the chateau reassumes its accustomed gaiety; and even the Prince, though jocund never, has grown again into that cheerful yet half pensive mood, that age and the tide of time have imbued his spirit withal. He is too good to be long bowed down. His weakness for his fair but false mistress De Feuchères is predominant still: he cannot break the spell. How often he cursed the hour that brought her across his path in exile! In calm hours of reflection he thinks of it with a blush. When he prayed for his son, her presence seemed a profanation. When he sits by the fireside at night, and the attendants have left his chamber; when he is alone, abandoned to the thoughts of a long life gone by, of a present speedily merging into the hereafter; when

some book or picture recalls the history of his glorious ancestry, and their illustrious deeds; when he thinks of his own prowess in youth amid the battle's heat; when he stands, as he stands now, with Nature around him, vigorous Nature on every hand bright and beautiful—then his purer spirit recoils: he will burst the bonds asunder. But her voice falls on his ear, and he trembles. The serpent eye is fixed upon him in false tenderness, and he is disarmed, enthralled.

The last rays of the setting sun have died away at Chantilly, and the hues are blurred and crimson that fall upon the little cavalcade. One or two friends are in the company; but they have fallen in the rear. The Prince and the Baroness de Feuchères ride side by side.

"Nay!" she said, with a smile, "you must whip the old roan if you wish to keep up with me, Prince."

"You have a goodly palfrey," he replied.

"A present from the Duke of Orleans," she said, eyeing him as she spoke.

The Prince's countenance changed.

"I was not to tell you," she continued, "your good cousin desired I would not; but

he is *so* kind, and *so* considerate to your Sophia, that you *shall* love him for my sake."

"It is not for man," exclaimed the Prince, "to call in question the motives of his fellow-creatures; but Orleans! Had it been any other, I might have believed; but Orleans!"

"I know your doubts," she said; "but they are indeed unjust, and—"

"What! my Sophia?"

"Your Highness is not ignorant that I have been weak, and that the world knows it. You are aware for whom that tender *penchant* was called to life. For *you* I have sacrificed all—husband, reputation, friends; above all, to *me*, the Court itself. Since our affection was *eclât-ed*, the lacqueys of the Tuileries no longer bow to the Baroness Feuchères."

"There is no atmosphere in courts that Love can dwell in, he replied; "the hot, unwholesome breath is fatal. But what has this to do with Louis Philippe of Orleans?"

"He has promised, and even now he endeavours to win me back the position I have forfeited. Would you not be glad to see your Sophia—her whom you love, respected as heretofore?"

The Prince de Condé was silent for a

moment. "And what," he said at last, "is to be the price of our cousin's good-will? He is no generous, open-hearted boy to find a thankful smile rich reward for a service done. When Orleans gives a palfrey he expects a war horse in return; when he sows a *sou* it is to reap a *louis d'or*."

"I know you love him not," she continued, gliding gently over the implied sarcasm; "but he and the amiable Duchess love you well."

The Prince's lip curled faintly with a sneer.

"They have hoped that, although you spurned their proffered affection, their son might be more happy. They thought that the young Duke d'—— might be adopted by you in lieu of him whom you have lost."

"In lieu of ——! never! never!" exclaimed the Prince; "who dare talk of replacing my brave, unhappy boy? Never!"

"You speak too loud, Prince," she answered hastily; "we are arrived. Now, gentlemen, since you insist upon my seeing the sport."

The gentlemen in attendance gathered round her; and one of them, taking her foot from the stirrup, assisted her to alight. The Prince

also descended from his steed, being debarred by the presence of those about him from expressing the sentiments of distaste which the subject of her conversation inspired in his bosom. While the horses were led to the neighbouring hamlet, the party entered the low, flat-bottomed boats that were in readiness, and were borne along stealthily, under the shadow of the overhanging boughs close to the bank, towards the spot where they could lie concealed. It was one of the Prince's favourite amusements—duck shooting; but he seemed silent and sad, and his attendants dared not attempt to rouse him.

It was the nature of the sport that they should remain hushed; and the Baroness Feuchères, wrapt in a large cloak, in one corner of the chief boat, sat still as the grave, indulging her own emotions.

It was not long before the spirit of the Prince relaxed into a softer mood. He took her hand; and thus, while the bright moon rose, and its light danced upon the waters, his bitter thoughts died away, and he sank into the usual caressing fondness that her presence always inspired.

The game they sought was plentiful in the place they had chosen; but the Prince expressed fatigue at an early hour, and the *chasse* was broken up prematurely.

The horses were led once more to the water-side. They mounted, and rode homeward at a rapid pace; so rapid, indeed, that the vaunted palfrey of the Baroness could scarcely keep up with the Prince's roan.

It was upon the stroke of midnight when they separated to seek their chambers.

He gazed wistfully after the Baroness as she moved away.

When he was alone, he ordered the casement to be opened, as if the clear, cool air of night was necessary to calm his troubled brain and its more troubled thoughts.

"Accursed wealth!" he sighed: "to him that needs, to him that has, alike accursed. No," he added, "I dare not yield! The will once signed that makes Orleans rich, and feeds the ambition of *her*—whom I should hate, but cannot—and how long shall Condé survive!"

He called his valet.

"Sleep in the ante-room, close to my chamber-door henceforth. I am restless."

The valet looked surprised.

"Remember," said the Prince, "it is my pleasure."

The valet bowed, and withdrew.

END OF THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER XXV.

Upon the billows of life Jerningham rises and falls, as the ocean upheaves, as the winds and waves bear the light bark onward.

He has pursued all his ordinary avocations; he has mingled with his kind; he has drunk the cup of society to the dregs, but in his heart there is a void.

He has courted ambition, and not without success; he has yielded to the allurements of Love's vulgar Anteros; he has associated with the choice spirits of the day; he has listened to the apothegms of the wise; he has laughed at the jests of the witty; but on his soul there is a shadow.

It haunts him everywhere.

In the calm evening hour, when the ploughman wends homeward, when the birds seek their nests, and the foxes their caves; when the fishing-skiff seeks the shore, and the bargeman drops anchor for the night; when all living things return to peacefulness, and Jerningham seeks the cottage, the presence is there.

At night, when he sits by his lonely fireside, when the howling of the wind makes him sad, when the screech of the owl makes him sadder, it is there.

And ever when he gazes upon *the empty chair;* when he looks furtively, fearfully upon the portrait of the lost; when he seems in imagination to hear the rich glad laugh; when he catches for a moment the clear low accents of the unforgotten voice, the shadow is upon his soul.

The shadow of Marie!

Why does she haunt him thus? she who deserted him? Did she not desert him? That question haunts him everlastingly. Was her sacrifice real? Had she really loved, and abandoned him to save him? or had vanity triumphed at last? It was so natural that a future of luxury and rank should effect the change.

And yet there are some tones we cannot

doubt—some feelings we cannot quell; there are years of thought centred in an instant; there are histories compressed into a word. A look would have reassured him. But she was gone! and with her not only his present, but his future. All was a blank!

Jerningham had fallen into a dull inanition—an indifference to his prospects; and somehow the world went ill with him. He became sad first, and then morose; the flow of intellect grew not less profound, but hidden among umbrageous foliage—unseen, and therefore unremembered. The world will not lavish favours long on those, however gifted, who scorn the effort to please.

He had a certain pique, moreover, against Lord Haverdale for his refusal to sanction his union with Marie. His Lordship had written more than once since Jerningham's departure from Paris; and Madame de Méranie even had addressed him in the tone at once dignified and playful, that she knew so well how to assume. He had never roused himself to reply.

Lord Haverdale was not the man to be beaten at such a game. The colt might run restive, but the reins were in hand, and the driver never shrunk. Thus by degrees a cool-

ness arose between the patron and the protegé. Angry and scornful, Jerningham no longer condescended to avail himself of the means offered by his father's friend. Proud in the possession of health and genius, he resolved to fight his way alone. When he became poor, poverty only made him prouder. He could still mingle with the aristocracy of wealth and rank; still when he exerted himself to excel, fair women hung upon the words of the popular author, and flattered him with their whispered praises: he could be a lion without a patron, and carve his own way.

He did so. He fought the battle bravely. The cottage dwindled away first. Then came a *lodging* near the clubs—it was more convenient for his friends. He was courted by society all the same, in spite of his diminished proportions. One night came the finishing stroke, Jerningham returning from a late dinner-party dropped in at the club, and there, over a dinner later still, sat Greville and the Marquis. He approached and saluted his old friend, and was introduced at once.

They were going down to the Marquis's seat, near Richmond, on the morrow, and Jerningham was invited to accompany them. He

assented, and next morning the coronetted carriage drew up at the lodging in Jermyn-street (a milk-shop, with a private door for lodgers), and he was wafted down to the luxurious mansion of the Marquis.

Pleasure was the order of the day, but boundless wealth brought boundless license alike to host and guest. When Jerningham returned, he had lost the two or three hundred pounds, which constituted his entire stock, at a single night of *hazard*, and the same carriage that had taken him down brought him back, with five guineas in his pocket to begin the world afresh—the same sum with which he had run away from school.

He knew he was ruined; yet with the singular calm peculiar to despair he gave no outward sign. He asked the porter of the club if he had any letters for him. Nothing.—yes! one: a billet from a friend's mistress, demanding a rendezvous. The sight of the signature sickened him, and he threw it into the hall fire, without reading it. Then he lit a cigar, and standing outside upon the steps, and leaning against the railing, he puffed and thought.

Of what? of all—of the past that he had

lost beyond redemption; of the present without hope; of a future leading whither? Assuredly of nothing so little as the figure that stood there before him—a weird form seen in the dim misty light, for the gas struggles with the rays of morning which shall conquer.

His garb, as ever, wild and tattered; the slouching hat thrown carelessly back: one hand stretched eagerly forward, to command attention, the other grasping, as if it were a regal truncheon, his oaken staff, Daft Jem stood in breathless agitation, that could neither advance nor retreat.

"Your Honour's Mr. Jerningham!" he said at last.

"Well!" replied Jerningham, who took no more heed than of an importunate beggar.

'And doesn't your Honour know me?" added Daft Jem imploringly.

Jerningham regarded him carelessly. "You here!" he exclained at last.

"Yes, your Honour! I came to the cottage accordin' to my promise; but you was ill, and so—"

"What?" continued Jerningham.

"I couldn't tell you about the hankercher wot you wanted to have."

"Handkerchief!" said Jerningham; and then the recollection flashed upon him again, which, strangely enough, had been entirely obliterated by the shock of his separation from Marie, and the fever that ensued. "Have you got it?" and he trembled as all the circumstances flashed across his mind.

Daft Jem seemed to hesitate.

Jerningham mistook the sentiment, and led him down the street. "Here!" he said, "you can speak here. Where is it? you shall have the reward—five guineas, you know. Come!"

"I *had* it, Sir," said Daft Jem; "it were where I said: I knowed it were, cos I'd watched it out o' love to that blue-eyed child, and I'd got it all safe, and I were a-comin' to you, when findin' as you was ill, and that I couldn't see you, I took it back, and was a-goin' to bury it again; but," and here he hesitated, "on the way I met Will Dirk the cadger."

"Well, well!" said Jerningham.

"He got me down to the *ken* to drink, and such-like, and get things out o' me about people as was to be found on the road; and after a glass or two I forgot, and pulled out the handkercher by mistake out o' my bosom.

I was a-goin' to put it back, but he snatches it, and reads the name and the sign on it."

"What name?" said Jerningham—"what sign?"

"Anan!" sighed Daft Jem, "I can't read."

"How then? afterwards? he kept it? he has it now?" exclaimed Jerningham rapidly.

"Aye! aye!" replied Daft Jem.

"Then," said Jerningham, "at least you know where to discover him—you have some clue. Speak! say Yes, or you will drive me mad!"

"Yes!" whispered Daft Jem, drawing closer; "to-morrow night I know where to find un', and I'm a-goin' to try it on—not for the money, but for your Honour's sake, because you've been kind to me, and I ain't used to *that!* No!" continued the poor worn youth, "I ain't used to kindness!"

Something like a tear was in Jerningham's eye, as these words escaped the erratic wanderer. Different as were their minds, their positions, their pursuits, they were still in a measure akin. *Kindness* was as unknown now to Jerningham as to Daft Jem.

"I will go with you," said Jerningham suddenly.

"It's a rare rough place," replied Daft Jem deprecatingly, "that's sartain! and 'tween ourselves, I'm happier when I'm out; but your Honour can't go like that."

"Not in this dress;" said Jerningham, glancing down at his evening costume; "no! come to me there!" and he gave him his card; "here is a sovereign! procure me a dress like your own. What time to-morrow night?"

"Why, ten may be!"

"So let it be!" replied Jerningham; "take a hackney-coach; bring my disguise; I can change as we go along; meet me at the corner of St. James's-square."

"At ten, your Honour?"

"At ten!" said Jerningham. "Think of the reward—five guineas for the handkerchief!"

"It ain't the reward," said Daft Jem, with genuine feeling; "it's cos you were kind to me."

"And so vanish my last five guineas," mused Jerningham, sadly—"at least if we succeed; and if we fail, I lose a vision five hundred could never repay."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE fashionable world has returned to town; and among arrivals chronicled in the *Morning Post* have duly appeared the names of Sir Edwin and Lady Malcolm at the honourable baronet's new mansion in Berkeley-square.

They have been absent long months at the family place in Scotland, where Sir Edwin passed his time in deer-stalking and shooting grouse. My Lady was left much alone, but she never complained. She was a model wife: yielding in everything, asking little, studious of his smallest caprice, careful always to evince no sense of superiority, expressing interest in all his pursuits (no matter how foreign to her tastes), gentle ever, and, though pensive at all times, never sad in the presence of her husband. When he arrived home at night, weary from the chase, the cheerful smile was there to greet him. When he departed on the morrow morn,

her small white hand was the last to pat the horse's veined flank ere he touched it impatiently with the spur; or from the oriel window of the breakfast-room, hers was the last nod that waved a kindly adieu. She left no duty undone; yet was there something mechanical in the performance. If this rectitude had all the regularity of machinery, it had at the same time all its passionless immobility. Sir Edwin began *to fear* this unsullied perfection; he felt as if, where love was, some flaw would be. Crude as were his perceptions, a kind of instinct taught him that such cold propriety belonged only to the mind; and that, while the reason ruled so pre-eminent, the heart, that tempestuous ocean of unfathomable passions, remained unmoved. The dawn of this conviction did not alter his love for his beautiful bride, of whose graces, rung hourly in his ear, he was so proud; yet he grew afraid: not less affectionate, but more ceremonious, more demonstrative of a stately sort of respect towards her, in their daily intercourse. He felt in her presence not so much that she was his wife, as that she was a lovely and distinguished guest, whom it was his happiness to know, his privilege to entertain.

The restraint, however, of this sentiment made Sir Edwin so ill at ease, that he gradually and insensibly declined one by one into his old pursuits, and among his old acquaintances. Dick Raven's invitation to Berkeley-square, first to breakfast and then to dine, was the earliest symptom of the change. His wife made no complaint. At the Opera the Baronet was much oftener behind the scenes than with my Lady in her box: the beauties there had neither the coldness of snow, nor its purity. It was soon rumoured about town that Mademoiselle Madolini had attracted the attentions of Sir Edwin: and that she drove her carriage and pair as the natural result. Lady Malcolm never hinted at this *liaison*, which was too notorious to escape her ears. She received her husband, whenever he *did* come back, with the same quiet cordiality of manner that no neglect seemed to ruffle.

Without his aid, friends and acquaintances innumerable have gathered round the rich young bride. Who so *répandu* as Lady Malcolm? The men-about-town insisted upon making her the fashion. There had been bets at Boodle's during the honeymoon, how long it would be before she adopted a

lover, or ran away from her liege lord. Swivel of the Blues went twenty to five with Canter the racing man, in ponies, and was paid by the latter with his famous colt Clipper, which proved a screw, and broke three of Swivel's ribs at the next steeplechase. When they were introduced to Lady Malcolm, she invited them just the same, though she must have known the story. They were soon disabused when they witnessed the dignity of her demeanour among her titled guests: the lofty kindness of her manner almost made them blush, which neither of them had ever done since he was twelve years old, and never thought to do again.

Swivel and Canter are at Lady Malcolm's ball in Berkeley-square to-night; so is Dick Raven, who was asked by Sir Edwin; and so are two hundred others of the fair and gay.

Magnificently attired, and covered with diamonds, she stands in radiant beauty surrounded by adoration. Her superlative loveliness has no equal beneath the blaze of those countless lights; not the proudest or noblest of her visitors bears a brow whose pride can excel her lofty mien.

But it is not triumph that lights her eye, as

it wanders absently on the splendour around. *One*, and only *one* being on earth would have known her emotions well enough to have traced the line of pain which slightly compressed her chiselled lips. Lady Malcolm is more the actress now than when she trod the stage at other times. It was easy to mimic the passions of another breast; but oh! how sad the effort to conceal her own! How deep the stifled sigh, when recollection rises from its cell in the heart's inmost recess! when all hopes of the Past are as charnel dust! when the Present and the Future are as urn-like ashes!

The announcement of a well-known name recals her; and, as Greville enters the rooms, she advances to meet him, and shake him cordially by the hand. There is a peculiar sentiment in her friendship for the good old man. When his hearty laugh rings at her dinner-table, she knows her only hours of gaiety. As he sits beside her now, with his fine intellectual forehead, and silver hair, bent towards her in undisguised admiration and respect, she feels that she has still a support, even as though a father were there; and, though she dare not harbour the thought for

more than a fleeting instant, has she no inward sense of another feeling? Had not that voice echoed in other walls, in an earlier and happier home, where her youth seems buried?

"I have left my bouquet in the conservatory," she said, when they had conversed for some time.

"Let me fetch it, Lady Malcolm," exclaimed Greville, rising briskly, like a *preux chevalier* as he was.

"No!" she replied, "give me your arm, and we will go together; there are several people I have not spoken to. Really, Malcolm asks all the club here: there are so many strangers, it's quite awkward."

"Too bad of him, upon my honour," said Greville; "if Sir Edwin turns the house into Noah's Ark, he really ought to come, and usher in the animals."

When they reached the conservatory her step, instead of pausing, grew quicker, and she led him through a side door, concealed among the camellias; and, closing it, he found himself thus suddenly alone with her in a charming boudoir. The draperies, of the most costly rose-coloured silk, entirely covering the

walls, made it almost like a little tent. A small couch was extended beside the fire, near a satin-wood table, covered with elegantly-bound books; in the midst of which, however, were a French pendule, and a minute silver gong.

She touched the latter, and before its clear ring had ceased, a page, in cream-coloured livery, obeyed the summons.

"I am engaged," said Lady Malcolm; "see that no one disturbs me."

"Yes, miladi," and the boy vanished.

The instant the door closed behind her, she sank into a *fauteuil*, and her proud mien fled. It was no longer Lady Malcolm in her diamonds and *hauteur*, but Marie, the simple Violet-eye of former times, whom Greville gazed upon.

"Oh, Mr. Greville!" she said, bursting into a passionate fit of weeping, "can you ever respect me again? Can you ever forgive me for this?"

"My dear Lady Malcolm," exclaimed Greville, almost moved to tears himself, "what *can* have disturbed you? The rooms were too hot; the—."

"No, no!" she added, with an impatient gesture, "I have heard news—ill news; it bows me to the earth."

He took her hand, and pressed it with paternal tenderness. The touch seemed to give her courage: she rose from her declining attitude, and sat with her clasped hands as one who implored.

"Tell me the truth," she said; "I have heard that *he*, Mr. Jerningham, is—worn with trouble—with pressing necessities—he has left the cottage."

"He has," answered Greville; "but how know you that?"

"We passed it on the way to town; and I *happened* to look out of the carriage-windows: it was vacant."

"He lodges near my house for the present," said Greville, "when he is not down at Jerningham Hall."

"He lives near you?" continued Lady Malcolm. "Oh! then you will not refuse to perform my bidding—it is easy; nor to keep my secret—for it is innocent! Believe me, it is innocent!"

Again he pressed her hand—that small

white jewelled hand which worked so convulsively.

"Mr. Greville," she added at last, resolving her marble countenance into a calm that was almost severe, "I *know* that *he* is becoming poor; nay, that he will soon," and her lip writhed, "perhaps, suffer want. Mr. Greville," she continued in faltering accents, "have mercy on me! Think, how for every pang he endures I suffer million-fold! Have pity on my sighs, on my sobs, my entreaties, for the sake of the Past, when *I*—when all were happy."

"I will, I will!" replied Greville, and the old man turned his head away, for he was almost choking.

"You know his pride," she added hurriedly; "if he dreamed that this came from me, he—he would spurn it. But *you* can convey it to him without exciting his suspicions."

She opened a silver escritoire, and drew forth a bundle of notes.

"My husband gave me these to-day for my quarter's pin-money," she said, trying to smile, but it was not the arch sweet smile of old; "I have enough without—take it all! Forge some excuse: convey it to him. Mind, I will

not eat or drink, or look well, or do anything else until you come and tell me that you have succeeded. You are bound captive to a lady's will! Remember! Hush!"

A knock at the door. She answered, and Sir Edwin entered, and began to chat with Greville.

It was not Marie, the impassioned Violet-eye of other times that sat there, then; but Lady Malcolm, in her diamonds and lofty mien.

And through the open door were wafted the perfumes of every choice flower; and mingled with them, like water's fall, came the glad notes of the guitar, and words of song that breathed of the sunny south.

Who doubted that Lady Malcolm was happy as she moved away, praised and courted by the brilliant throng?

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Two to one on the striker!" exclaimed Jerningham, to the Pool players!

"Done!" said Swivel.

Half-past nine at the Club, and after an early dinner, cigars and betting were busy in the billiard-room.

"Two to me!" exclaimed Jerningham, as the stroke fell in his favour, and the sovereigns were handed over.

"Go again?" said Swivel.

"Very well!" answered Jerningham; "two to one on yellow!"

"He's mad!" whispered Canter, "must have been drinking Whipper's strong port!"

Yellow is nervous at having a bet upon him, so he plays at random, dazzled by the lights and blinded by the smoke. Through a miracle

he succeeds, and a roar of applause and laughter echoes through the room.

"Two to me again!" said Jerningham, holding out his hand for the sovereigns, as if it were a matter of course.

"Double or quits?" said Swivel.

"*A la bonne heure!*" cried Jerningham; and he thought how Napoleon gained the funds for his Italian campaign, at a gambling-house, by trying again.

"Blue!" said Jerningham. The stroke succeeded instantly, and a third time he won!

Ten o'clock was heard booming from the church hard by. He pocketed his winnings, lit another cigar, and left the room.

Very glad to see his five guineas doubled, Jerningham turned from St. James's-street into St. James's-square. The vehicle was already in waiting, and no sooner did he appear than Daft Jem, no whit altered, but staff in hand, and ragged as of old, advanced to greet him.

"It's werry roomy, please your honour!" he whispered, "and you can get in; put the blinds up all round, turn the glim on, and mount the togs, while we hang along here, close to the trees, where it's dark!"

He entered the carriage, which proved to be an old travelling family coach, now degraded to a hackney conveyance; and having turned on the light from a dark lantern, and adopted the other arrangements suggested by Daft Jem, he proceeded to examine the bundle which lay ready for his use.

It contained habiliments similar to his strange companion's — ragged and coarse enough; and when he looked at his own reflection in the little square piece of looking-glass that had been provided, and which lay on the cushion opposite, he felt that his *incognito* must be complete, for he could scarcely recognize himself.

"You must have a short pipe!" said Daft Jem, "'cos that 'ere cigar u'd 'peach on us. Number sivin aint a swell ken, where Will Dirk be; they doesn't come re'el weeds—not there!"

Jerningham had thought of this beforehand; he lit up a clay pipe, with the stem broken off short, and Daft Jem pronouncing him to be complete, they started on their way.

Daft Jem rode outside to direct the driver, who seemed to have had just enough stimulus

to make him go anywhere, without knowing or caring whither.

They crossed the river, passed one or two theatres gleaming with light, through flaring streets, where old clothes were hung out for sale; through many bye-ways, where oil burned dimly, but with a meaning, until they came to a purlieu called Vauxhall-square.

It was near the famous pleasure-garden of that name: the noblest of the land, and some, though frail, the fairest, revelled oft within a hundred yards of that dark spot, 'mid the well-kept, well-lit walks! They stopped near it, but not too near; they were sheltered by a long dark wall.

"I often sleeps here!" said Daft Jem, as they stood in a side alley near the square; "number sivin's here; it's here I were done; but I don't expect to find Will Dirk, 'cos you see, them as has got anything moves off, and hangs out some'eres else. Wait an instant, your honour; you ain't afraid to be left?"

"Afraid!" said Jerningham, scornfully.

Daft Jem did not see the proud curl on Jerningham's lip; but the sound of the voice assured him, and he glided onward. In his absence, Jerningham had leisure to look round

and examine the dreary tenements, as well as the dull light permitted.

There was at least as much misery as vice. Misery everywhere! In the men, who lay besotted and lazy outside their doors: in the women, who stood with folded arms, redolent of gin: in the children, flinging loathsome oaths about: in the air that reeked with fever: in the rooms that gaped empty with famine: in rude couches, where the ill were left to die, and the dead were deserted altogether—in all, misery, and therefore vice; in each, in all, squalor, wickedness, despair!

Before Jerningham had finished his survey from beside the blank wall, where he lay *perdu*, Daft Jem touched his arm lightly; he started, and bent his head to listen; but Jem spoke out without fear, now that he had reconnoitred.

"He ain't there!" said Daft Jem; "he's at the 'Chapel to-night!"

"The Chapel?" returned Jerningham.

"The ken in Whitechapel: there's a ken there!"

"Let us on then!" said Jerningham.

"Now," said Jem, "'afore we starts *there*, are you sure of yourself, your honour? It

ain't a pleasant place. I've been a'most afraid to booze in the den myself!"

Jerningham made an impatient gesture.

"It's where the thieves is!" he added, "and p'raps we'd better have 'spector Thomas with us; he'll go for a goldfinch,* and then there won't be no capers up!"

"As you will!" was the hurried answer.

They sought the coach accordingly, woke the driver, who was enjoying a furtive nap, and hurried onward. Inspector Thomas lived in the City, when he was at home, which was very rarely. His wife took care of some offices, and either was suspended in the attics like a spider, or buried in the cellars like a mole. Her face was as a padlock; it held fast, and revealed nothing. It was surprising, indeed, how Inspector Thomas had fallen into his present line of business: to look at his smiling, open face, you would have taken him for the very benevolent, but heavy, father in Surrey drama, who is always giving purses to the afflicted, or making the young couple happy, in the third act, at half-past ten, or thereabouts. You would never have suspected

*A sovereign.

him of knowing more of *London* than a Parliamentary return—of being a greater thief-taker than Jonathan Wild.

Like Dugald Dalgetty, Inspector Thomas made sure of his "provend" when he could. He had finished his supper, and now appeared in his night-cap in preparation for bed. He was not, however, disconcerted by the prospect of a night's adventure. In the course of a very few minutes he came down, habited as a vagrant ne'er-do-we'el of the country lanes, and they sought the darkest and most impenetrable purlieus of Whitechapel. As they rolled along, Jerningham was not at all sorry for the protective presence of Inspector Thomas.

"Now mind!" said the Inspector, "we go to the ken, as if we were going for a night's lodging. I'll contrive to keep 'em talking down-stairs—I knows *how*;" and Inspector Thomas's eye twinkled—"while you go up with Daft Jem. If there's danger, blow this twice," and he gave Jerningham an ivory whistle. "Here we stop!"—he pulled the check-string—"this is near enough to be safe. Be ready, remember!" he added to the

driver, who was excessively polite to Inspector Thomas.

The fellow gave an acquiescent touch to his hat, and they moved away together to the fœtid resort of crime. It was very loathsome, and Jerningham's heart almost sank within him, not with fear, but with disgust, as they entered; but he thought of all that hung upon the result, and steeled himself to the task.

How they entered Jerningham scarcely saw; for the door, opening with a spring at the touch, showed no light without; and the sudden transition from the darkness of the night to the blaze of a large lamp, deprived him for an instant of the power of distinguishing objects around. A Jewess, half-clad, and more than half intoxicated, scrutinised them as they passed up the ricketty stair. The glance was satisfactory, or the penetrative powers, peculiar to her race, were lulled with alcohol. She made no remark, until Inspector Thomas addressed her in the flash slang with which she was familiar.

While they conversed, Daft Jem and Jerningham ascended the stairs. They came to a door: Daft Jem opened it with the well-known touch. A few more steps, and then

another door: it opened like the first. They passed this, too. Close to it appeared a third portal, apparently strongly barred. Here Daft Jem glanced at Jerningham with an enquiring look, that asked if he faltered. The pressure upon his arm was answer enough. At the magic of his touch this last barrier opened to them, and closed instantly. They stood in the midst of the den: it was arranged as a sleeping apartment, with twenty or thirty mattresses of straw for beds spread on the floor, close alongside each other.

A lamp, burning brightly enough, and suspended from the ceiling, shed a wild light over all.

Here, in a strange commingled mass, were huddled men, women, and children—the refuse of creation; the outcasts of the world. Some were muttering in low whispers: some were maudlin with gin: some were sitting up in bed, playing at cards. One woman was weeping bitterly over a youth beside her. When the two new comers entered she ceased; but finding that they sank down quietly, she thought the danger past, and gave way again to her lamentations. Daft Jem and Jerningham were scarcely settled in a couple of the

wretched resting-places, the position of which was carefully chosen, when the door opened suddenly: a lantern's rays were thrown on every face in the room in turn, until they lit the features of this very youth. He pretended not to notice it; but in vain! The woman was smiling; but breathless! A figure advanced, tapped the boy upon the shoulder—he could not have been eighteen—and he rose and followed the officer. A shrill shriek from the woman, who had known his danger, and who sunk senseless now, and the card-players continued their game. The occurrence was a common one. The youth was guilty of burglary—convicted—transported for life. He and the woman never met again on earth.

This sudden diversion was favourable to Jerningham and his schemes. With a glance of the eye, Daft Jem, full *now* of idiot-cunning, had intimated that Will Dirk lay beside them in the next crib. He was fast asleep, too, or as nearly asleep as he could be; for if he did not sleep with one eye open, the caution of years had taught him the dog-slumber, that wakes at a sound.

"Here!" said Daft Jem, pulling out a pack

of cards; "all fours at a shillin' a game won't kill us!"

"Aye! aye! if you like!" replied Jerningham.

Daft Jem made a great pretence of shuffling the cards and playing; but his eyes were on Will Dirk. Suddenly, Jerningham saw Daft Jem's hand—he was chattering all the time—steal towards the head of the pallet on which Will Dirk reclined. A small bundle formed the pillow: it was to this the fingers were directed. As he withdrew the envied and well-folded support, a roar of laughter rung from the card-players in a distant corner. Will Dirk stirred. A blanket, prepared in readiness, was inserted beneath his head in lieu of the abstracted parcel; but he detected the fraud, and shouted forth an alarm.

Daft Jem thrust the parcel into Jerningham's hands, told him to whistle loudly, and then dashed his staff with such violence against the lamp that it fell with a crash, shivered into a thousand fragments, and the den was dark as night.

During the uproar that ensued, Jerningham whistled again—twice, as he had been in-

structed. A step approached; the rays of a dark lantern were thrown from the opened door upon all around, and Inspector Thomas advancing without the least symptom of hesitation, and quite alone, into the midst, tapped Daft Jem and Jerningham each on the shoulder, and beckoned them to follow. The remaining inmates of the apartment made no resistance: they were only too happy not to be the victims themselves; for they knew the Inspector too well.

The trio passed the doors: they passed the Jewess: they breathed once more the open air. Tremblingly by the light of the coach-lamp, Jerningham unfolded the parcel of Will Dirk, the cadger; it contained some greasy papers, a pocket-book, evidently stolen, a knife, a pick-lock, a few skeleton keys, and a capacious tobacco-box. On opening this last receptacle, Jerningham found something besides tobacco. With the aid of the inspector's knife he tore it to pieces in an instant. The tobacco fell to the ground: he picked it up, and in the midst of the weed, folded up in a singularly minute compass, was the handkerchief.

Seeing his agitation, Inspector Thomas took

it from his hand, and opened it out. It was of the most costly cambric, and in one corner was worked a Coronet, with the cipher H., and beneath it the crest of Lord Haverdale !

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JERNINGHAM paid the coachman, fee'd Inspector Thomas, gave Daft Jem the five guineas, and they all departed, leaving him alone on the kerb-stone—alone with his secret and the world.

As they drove away, he gazed round him. They had brought him unconsciously near his lodging. The first grey light of dawn had appeared long since: it was now nearly day. He saw his bed-room window—an ignoble attic—looking cold, dull, and tenantless: there was no invitation to enter; but the force of habit seemed to beckon him to turn the key and ascend. On the hall table beside the lamp was Greville's card. He thought nothing of it, but crumpling it into his pocket, he passed upward, reached his room, and sank into a capacious *fauteuil* before the window.

That window looked on a wine-merchant's office. He was a merry, red-faced man, who stood at the door of his counting-house of afternoons, and smoked his cigar after an early dinner. He had two daughters, small in stature, but roguish in mind, who read novels all day, and strove to win the second floor over the milk-shop always, no matter who he was, because the room was opposite theirs, and a bachelor haunt at all times. Those Flowers would be trying to win Jerningham now; but they are folded in slumber—rose-petals closed by the warm dew on Morpheus' finger.

Jerningham lit a cigar, and sitting opposite the window in his easy chair, he forgot the Roses; but he marked the rich colours that the daybreak shed even on the dwelling of the wine-merchant: yellow, purple, violet, stained the bricks and mortar with unearthly glow, until all merged into the clear, cold grey of morning.

With the dying colours sank Jerningham's eye; and on the dressing-table was a letter, which he observed now, but had not seen before.

— took it up, and lighting a fresh cigar
e cover, he was about to draw the

candle nearer, to peruse lazily the contents of the *billet* itself, when, on opening it, no writing met his eye, but a peculiar rustle struck his ear, to which particular sound it had only been too strange of late. On tearing open the envelope, he found some Bank of England notes: he counted them. Two hundred and fifty pounds.

He started up, as if he had been struck with a rifle-shot. Was he dreaming? No! there were the notes plainly, palpably: he drew them through his fingers. There was no mistake. From whom then had they come? He thought of Greville's card; but Greville was too poor himself. He thought of Lord Haverdale; but *that* was soon scouted. At last Marie occurred to him. He combatted the idea strongly, haughtily; but it grew upon him. He knew not how she could have found out his address; yet still an accident might have revealed it: he knew her nature so well, that doubt soon grew into certainty. Without coupling Greville in any way with the adventure, he felt satisfied his suspicions were well grounded.

He took out his purse, and examined its contents. After paying everything, there still remained three guineas. All the blood of his ancestors arose in him at the idea of receiving

alms. He packed up the notes again, addressed the packet to Lady Malcolm, in Berkeley-square, without any comment, watched on the other side of the way while his messenger delivered it, and then strode off.

For some time he walked forward, regardless of his path, when suddenly, at Hyde-Park Corner, he came upon an early breakfast stall, and there he paused to rest. The company gathered round, enjoying that refreshing meal, consisted of a sweep and a little boy, waiting until the servants were up, to clean the Duke of Devonshire's chimneys; the waterman of the neighbouring hackney-coach stand; and a small man, looking very old, and a large man, looking very young, who sat beside a female figure with a thick veil. They were all enjoying hot coffee and bread-and-butter unlimited; only one youth, who had met with a run of luck at his crossing the day before, indulged in the additional luxury of half a fried sole; but, as in many other things, the display was dearly bought, for bone was painfully predominant.

Suddenly the sun, glancing across the Park, covered the houses in Piccadilly with such a blaze of light that all the loiterers started

simultaneously to their feet. The sweeps rung again at the Duke's mansion, and were admitted: the waterman retired to his coach-stand; and to Jerningham's surprise the three other figures rose, revealing a dwarf about two feet high, a giant seven feet in his stockings, and a masculine female of remarkable stature.

"Here! carry us across the road, will yer?" said the dwarf.

Jerningham took the poor little creature, who, though diminutive, was beautifully shaped, and transferred him to the opposite pavement, as if he had been an infant.

"Thank you!" he said, in a manly voice; "I don't want to change before the show opens, and the roads make a *man's* breeches so dirty."

He was in knee-breeches and silk stockings; and very manly indeed, for two feet high.

"You've got a show near here?" asked Jerningham of the dwarf.

"Yes! and now we're goin' home to nap for an hour. Yer see the night's the only time as *we* can go out to get the fresh h'air, 'cos it don't do to make dwarfs and giants common; but even now they ain't so good as they was; they've fell wonderful!"

"Ah!" sighed the giant, in a squeaky small voice, "I've know'd the time when you, and me, and the Bearded Beauty of Buenos Ayres —ah! we've gone to supper with two-pun' ten of a day, and had our grog in the van like gen'lemen, and smoked our 'bacco's too; eh! Sally?"

"Those *was* times!" replied the lady, throwing up her veil, and revealing the beard that constituted her livelihood. "You should have kep' Hector, the Cornish dwarf, thirteen inches in his shoes, from givin' us up, and leavin' ours to walk the streets in spite! It was *that* killed the show profession. Dwarfs aint nothin' now, and giants aint much; it's the astoundin' female novelty as does it, and keeps you goin'. Thank my beard, and give me a pipe. Come in!" she added, to Jerningham, as they reached the van, seeing that he faltered; "come in. We've still a glass of somethin' for the friends as drops in!"

Like a spoiled beauty, she did just as she liked; for the beard was the lion of the show, and she knew it. She spread a small deal table between the bed and the stove with some glasses, and a bottle or two of spirits. The dwarf poised himself upon a high stool; the

giant coiled himself up into the smallest compass possible, like a telescope or a boa constrictor; the bearded lady sat on the edge of the bed, and smoked and twisted her whiskers into shape; and Jerningham looked on silently, and puffed the pipe of peace.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JERNINGHAM looked on in silence, but not attentively. Though the eyes were open, the sense was shut. He was confused, bewildered by the events of the past night. Before his mental vision floated a mingled mass of images: Daft Jem, Will Dirk the cadger, Inspector Thomas, and then the money—the three guineas in his pocket, the two hundred and fifty pounds sent back so contemptuously to Marie. Marie! no longer Marie; but Lady Malcolm! *That* thought armed him again in the mail of his pride.

He had tried to collect his thoughts, but they escaped him like immaterial shadows. What had he learnt? what did he know? In his bosom—where he put his hand to feel that

it was safe, every instant—was concealed the handkerchief marked with the coronet of Lord Haverdale. That it had been found upon Marie he could not doubt. The story of Daft Jem accorded exactly with what she had herself related at Paris, in the presence of Michael Brent. All the circumstances were the same: the death of her conductor; the *locale* of the inn and the churchyard; the stranger who took compassion upon her, and bore her away. All this corresponded. But the coronet on the handkerchief! He could not help vaguely connecting it all with a scene long past —with the visit he first paid to the Hall in company with Marie, when Lord Haverdale met him so strangely, and was himself met still more strangely, and evidently by appointment, by the stern female, dark and imperious, who dared beard the proud noble before whom all quailed. While she spoke angrily, revengefully, Lord Haverdale had bidden him stay by his side. When she ceased, and turned scornfully from their view, Jerningham had seen his guardian's features quivering with painful recollections. And they had spoken of a child, a daughter—the father, Lord Haverdale; the mother the strange

female: she claimed it for her own. And could Marie be that child? the child of Lord Haverdale!

The tumult of mind and body wore him out at last. He fell asleep in the corner of the van; still and motionless in his chair, slumbering from utter exhaustion.

The dwarf, the giant, and the bearded lady having finished their pipes and grog, tried each in turn to wake him, but without effect, so they let him slumber on; and as day was now advancing, and passers-by were becoming sufficiently numerous to warrant the anticipation of an audience, they proceeded to open the show. A man, who had been in bed somewhere in the bowels of the van, came out, gave himself a shake, took a long broom (the pieces of which fitted together like a fishing-rod), and dusted the large picture outside; and the three attractions having retired behind a crimson curtain, the man aforesaid (who did the speaking business) blew a tune upon the horn, and operations commenced.

No occasion to relate how the showman, with parrot-like volubility, executed his task; how the wonderful dwarf came first, how the wonderful*ler* giant came next, and how the

bearded lady from Buenos Ayres, the wonderful*est* of all, as he declared, came last to astonish the breathless and successive audiences, who invested their spare earnings in the study of physical phenomena.

When Jerningham woke, it was past midday: a slumber of six hours had braced up his nerves again. He was invited to the penetralia of the van; but finding that the only attraction set forth was some porter, which had been ordered for the giant's refection, and from which he was now rising literally "a giant refreshed," Jerningham insisted on their receiving something for their civility, and quitted the singular society into which chance had so curiously thrown him for a space.

Not that he had any definite object in view; for he wandered away, dreaming and listless, careless of his path; too indifferent to home to seek that, too weary of the world to seek any one.

Suddenly the rich note of a horn rung upon his ear. He started round, and saw the mail-coach approaching, that passed through Violet-dale. The sound was cheerful; the scarlet

coats of the guard and driver looked cheerful too: at least it was a momentary escape from thought. He beckoned, the coach stopped, and he mounted; and in another minute was on the way to the Hall.

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR Edwin Malcolm finds daily more consolation in the society of Dick Raven, and the Madolini, than Berkeley-square can yield, with nothing but Marie! No one was kind enough to tell him that the Opera singer was the cast-off mistress of his friend; that she had been laid out to lure him. He forgot his ten thousand a-year; and thinking only, poor boy, how his mother had smoothed his flaxen hair and waxen cheek, and told him he was beautiful, he dreamed that *she*, the Madolini, LOVED him! What cared he for the amount of the cheques he drew, if only the small Italian head, with the hair so classically braided, was near, to meet his eye, or sweep his cheek! What was a milliner's bill, when *she* glanced at his box in the midst of a fascinating "*scena*"? And then, at the *denouement*, when bouquets

showered upon the stage, when the pit rose, when the gallery was vociferous, was not the clear dark eye bent furtively upon *him;* and was not *that* token of affection worth millions? Sir Edwin grew day by day more and more enthralled; more and more a slave. His time was now entirely passed either at the villa with his mistress, or at the Old Grange with Dick Raven in unceasing billiards.

His wife had become something too pure, too lofty for him. He approached her with diffidence. When she spoke to him, he blushed; when she rallied him respecting his absence, he shrunk away still more. He could not tell why, but his *home* seemed to be elsewhere. He had learnt to talk broken Italian to his mistress, who was worthless: half the trouble would have taught him to talk good English to his wife, who was beyond all price.

One form of debauchery naturally introduces all the rest, and drunkenness is sure to be in the van.

From this time Lady Malcolm saw little of her husband. She knew how his money was drained away, but her personal wants were moderate, and she never upbraided him with an unworthy use of his fortune. With *him*

was the power; with *him* the right; she recognised and obeyed. He gave her no chance now of leading him into a wiser path. He was always absent or insensible. Even here, however, her duty did not fail; she never forgot it. She wrote to him—not angrily, not as his wife, but as a friend, pointing out the errors into which he was falling. He told Dick Raven to answer it, and offer her a better box at the Opera. Marie! the high-souled Marie! erewhile the companion of Edward Jerningham, the confidante of all his earnest dreams and proud imaginings—to be *bought* by an opera-box on the first tier! She did not sigh when she found the billet on her dressing-table, and read it; nor did she laugh contemptuously. But she folded her thoughts up in their secret cell, deep, deep, beyond all human fathoming, leaving on the surface nothing but the external calm, the empty smile, and the vague tone that left society in the dark.

One night Sir Edwin was brought home in a fit. He had arrived late and unexpectedly from the Grange at the Madolini's. Entering when the door happened by accident to be open, he proceeded noiselessly to the chamber

of his mistress. It was locked. Concealment was useless. Sir Edwin was not intoxicated enough for *that*. He pursued the intruder, and found Dick Raven, *her* former protector, and *his* friend. He tried to upbraid his companion, his *friend*. His mistress he was wise enough to despise in an instant. Dick Raven, however, who had impudence enough for any emergency, was proceeding to exculpate himself and explain, but the effort was unnecessary, for before Sir Edwin had heard a single syllable, he sank on the floor, paralyzed in drunken stupidity.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN Daft Jem left Jerningham, with five guineas in his pocket—five golden guineas, full weight, real gold, warranted to ring—then was Daft Jem beyond himself. He stopped to examine them under the lamps, and waived away intruders with his staff. He rung them upon the pavement in obscure places, up blind alleys, on the stones of forsaken squares where Fashion slept. They were real gold!

Then Daft Jem did not feel safe in a crowded city. He flourished his staff and hurried away — away to the country. So much wealth was not to be trusted in the great Babel. He must dig a hole and bury it. The idea of spending it never entered his mind for an instant.

Insensibly he took the road to Violetdale, not so much because he had any attraction

that drew him thither, as because it was sequestered. A walk of a day or two was nothing to Daft Jem; and though the road was long, he had a strange fancy for the spot he sought. Perhaps so lately quitting Jerningham caused him to think of it more; but he went on to it doggedly and steadily hour after hour, waiting here to get a glass of water, and there a crust; and it was evening of the next day when he approached the village.

He entered, and of course looked in at the Crooked Billet as he passed. The young new bride looked very blooming, and did the honours of the bar with an air that left the late Mrs. Hiccup as much in the shade, as she was now in the Shades below. But Hiccup was less radiant in his mien. Either the effort had been too much for him, or the oil was burning out. Hiccup looked proud, and prim, and well to do, but gouty and yellow withal. Hiccup must take care of himself, that's certain. He is not so young by nearly thirty years as when Master Edward was born, and the tumblers evolved, and the rest of the fun, made joyful the grounds and tenantry of Jerningham. Hiccup must attend to the creature comforts now, and he sits by the fireside

accordingly, and does not move when customers come, but devotes himself to himself religiously.

Daft Jem's refreshment here consists of something he had dreamt about from earliest youth. He had never thought it would be realized, except perhaps in extreme old age, when no end of walking had brought him, by some abstruse method not explained, into a state of independence. But now, if ever, was the time to be extravagantly rash. The Crooked Billet was celebrated for Welsh rarebits and old ale, with a roasted crab in it. Daft Jem had figured these luxuries to himself in a visionary kind of way, through all the changes of the seasons for many a lonely year. The debauch he had always thought would come best in winter time. It was rather chilly now, and he had five guineas in his pocket. Toasted cheese and old ale for ever! How gaily the crab-apple floated, bobbing against the sides of the glass, and circumnavigating on its liquid surface the sea of chesnut ale—a very Bacchus turned Captain Cook!

Daft Jem could *not* contain himself. The excitement was too much for him. He got up,

to look at its effect from a distance. He walked round it, in order to see it from every point. Yes, it was all real! There was *he*—Daft Jem—reflected, staff and all, in the tankard itself, as well as in a triangular piece of mirror over the mantel-piece; and there was the banquet—no imaginary, pantomimic repast of pasteboard and tinsel, but a supper that invited the beholder to sit down, and sent tantalizing perfumes ever so far down the lane.

Daft Jem sat down; and when his eyes rose again, the cheese and toast had vanished, and so had half the ale. The other half was intended to be sipped leisurely. Daft Jem had as much right to enjoy himself as the best gentleman in the land. But the greatest triumph was to come—to PAY for the banquet; not with odd farthings, and doubtful coppers of other degree, or sixpences with holes in them, or shillings much sweated, *but* with a golden guinea—to demand "change"—to give the waiter something for himself—this was "life," if you like!

More absorbed in his happiness than we *should* be in aught of mundane mould, Daft Jem did not note the eye of a new-comer watching him stealthily through the oblong

glass in the door of the tap. Blissfully ignorant, he paid his reckoning, shouldered his staff, and wandered away, taking the path, insensibly, that led to the forest and Jerningham Hall. His ambition was fulfilled: beyond it was nothing—chaos—only the pleasure of memory. He sat down in the starlight, beneath a large oak-tree that grew alongside the entrance to the Hall, and indulged in such reverie as his confused mental organization would allow.

He had not been there five minutes, before a firm grip was on his throat, a knee planted immoveably on his chest; and, by the light of a dark-lantern which his assailant suddenly turned full upon all objects around, regardless of concealment, he saw the grim features of Will Dirk gleaming over him with a double expression of malignity and revenge.

"So, so, my pigeon!" said Will Dirk. "Yer must beat the rook, eh? 'Cos yer were up to *fly*, yer must cheat the magsman, eh? Yer must let the beak into the ken, eh?"

Too much thunderstruck at the surprise to give any intelligible reply, Daft Jem contented himself with a loud roar, while Will Dirk

accompanied each of his queries with a blow that reduced the said roar to a falsetto, and made his frame and voice quiver in unison.

"Now, then," said Will Dirk, "where's the *wipe?* There's a story connected with that handkercher, or yer wouldn't have cadged to get it; so tip it, or here goes again!"

He raised his heavy, hammer-like fist; and Daft Jem, who was sitting up for breath, felt as if he should be driven into the earth like a nail, if the blow fell; so he deprecated the attack by falling down flat again.

"Anan!" cried Daft Jem, sobbing, as he thought, not of the handkerchief, but of his remaining guineas, "the wipe's gone."

"Gone!" replied Will Dirk. "Oh, yer unnatural thief, to rob a pal!" And he gave Jem another blow in the ribs, that disturbed the cheese and ale uncommonly. "Oh, it's gone, eh? Then who was the other cove with yer?"

"Don't know," said Daft Jem, in mortal agony, and so perfectly conscious that he would not be believed, that he expected another blow instantly.

"Oh, yer don't know! then shall I help yer

memory?" He was half-inclined to follow the remark with the anticipated salute, but a fresh idea struck him. "Oh, yer aint got the handkercher—then what did yer get for the job? Tip it—come!"

The arm was up again. Daft Jem gave a scream of anguish; but the dark-lantern lit every cranny in his ragged attire. Pocket after pocket was turned out; and at last, from an obscure crevice, fell the small heap of gold, silver, and copper, which constituted a fortune that poor Jem had deemed a terrestrial independence. Will Dirk's eyes gleamed with triumph as it rolled upon the sward. Daft Jem, howling and tearing himself, saw the coins one by one picked up, and transferred by his assailant—some into his neckhandkerchief, some into his shoes, and the gold he put in his mouth, while he disposed of the rest. When the spoil was conveniently appropriated about his person, he rose up, and looked at the prostrate Jem with a taunting sneer; and a laugh of triumph rang through the air from his dirty, unshaven lips. The sound had scarcely escaped him, the lantern was still gleaming brightly around, when, as Will Dirk

turned to hurry away, a figure darted through the shrubbery—an arm struck him to the earth.

Daft Jem sprung to his feet, and, finding that his preserver was Edward Jerningham, fell in tears upon his neck.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LONELY ever, knowing no friend, no home, Ayesha still lives, still wanders, still dreams over her one solitary hope. A vague kind of fascination, which she cannot define, attracts her footsteps continually either towards Jerningham's deserted cottage, or the old Hall. Her restlessness, like that of Daft Jem, has settled into a habit; and she rises from sickness to pursue her way in sorrow, and sink again into disappointment and despair. In a single characteristic only is she changed, and we have noticed this before: her spirit was softened. Revenge was no longer the ruling passion of her breast. She had learnt to weep. Had the divine consolations of religion soothed her soul to this? It was a subject of which her wild and untutored soul knew nothing; yet it must have been something akin to the holy

and the good that worked the transformation. And as the rebellious fire was extinguished, let us believe that Providence beneficently ceased to punish the guilt, and deigned to pity the distress. Her mind had become insensibly imbued with a consoling belief in the future. She had begun to think that shame expiated by so much agony might be wiped away, and that some recompensing happiness hereafter in another life might perhaps counterbalance some of the grief of this.

The feverish pursuit of her lost child led her to think much upon Lord Haverdale; and she pictured him in her mind's eye, not as the man who had deceived, but as the lover who had been the father of all she held most dear. Towards him her mood was entirely altered. Animosity had fled; jealousy was extinct. She knew that his love was another's still, that it would be so always, and that no earthly power could make it once more hers. Yet still in him was embodied her Past—her life; for is not the *life* of a woman the memory of her first love? No other being had ever created in her bosom the emotions he had awakened; no other footstep had made her heart beat quick. She could see now by the

light of a calmer intellect the errors into which she had fallen, and the folly of the angry passions by which she had estranged him. These mutations of mind were not sudden, but gradual and convincing; though increased, if not produced altogether by the prostration of gathering disease. Illness, by crushing the passions, renders the mind more susceptible to reason and to good.

If Ayesha had any desire now, beyond the absorbing search for her child, it was to see Lord Haverdale once again before she died. She would look once more upon the marble brow, that, cold and haughty as it was, had yet been pillowed upon her bosom in happier times; she would gaze yet again, though unseen, upon the pale cheek, whose apathy, not always passionless, had flushed at her beauty in years gone by.

It was the evening hour when she sat beneath a towering pine in the forest, dreaming over this in reverie, silent and absorbed. The moment was in unison with her thoughts; for twilight was veiling the earth, and the rook was winging homeward, the blackbird and the thrush had ceased their melody, and the cricket had not yet begun its chirp, nor

the owl its melancholy cry; the breezes had left the branches, and the streamlet seemed to glide away more quietly; lights gleamed dim and distant from cottage-doors, to light the absent onwards; the ploughman entered the village again to stable his weary team; the bench outside the ale-house was forsaken for the merry hearth within; and the blacksmith's forge bellowed forth fire like a volcano, eclipsing the long deep red line of light that still lingered in the west.

She drew forth a letter, and perused it again: its contents seemed to confirm her resolve. She rose, exclaiming, "Yes! once again I will see him; once more, and for the last time, cross the sea to look upon his face, and recall the happiness I have lost, and then —to return! to seek my child again, or else to die!"

Moving silently on through the well-known avenues of the forest, she passed the boundary that separated it from the park, and entered the shrubbery that surrounded the Hall. She paused. Her quick eye glanced rapidly round upon every familiar object—along the paths, over the grey old building itself, and upon the distant lodge: it was all still, not a creature

stirring. Then she advanced under the shadow of the terrace, and stopped beneath the window of the library, which was the apartment always occupied by Jerningham during his visits to the Hall, on account of associations that have been already explained. The terrace was clustered with ivy, which overhung, almost touching the ground below with its delicate tracery; and into the gap between this and the wall, a nook admirably adapted for concealment, Ayesha stepped noiselessly, and disappeared.

To recur for an instant to another scene. We left Jerningham standing beside Daft Jem, whom he had rescued, and the cadger Will Dirk, whom he had prostrated upon the ground. It was some time before he could procure anything like a connected account of what had happened, so mad was Daft Jem with joy. He danced about the insensible Will, he flung his staff in the air and caught it, he pulled out his money to look at it over and over again, and wept and laughed and hugged his preserver until he was nearly suffocated. Daft Jem's ribs were rather sore from the pommelling so ruthlessly administered by his opponent; but he forgot that, as well as the

derangement of the rarebit and ale, and, in fact, everything else, in rapture at his release. When he grew a little more calm, the question arose as to the disposal of Will Dirk, who lay bleeding from the nose and breathing stertorously, and who could not be roused, so well had the blow been dealt; although Daft Jem propped up his broken head upon a bough, and shook two or three handfuls of water from the brook over his face, and tried all the means at hand that seemed likely to be effectual. The position was becoming awkward; for although the vagabond deserved his fate, common humanity revolted at the idea of leaving him there to linger in pain, perhaps to lose his life, and Daft Jem resolutely refused to wait and watch him alone: he was quite as afraid of his antagonist now that he was down, as he had been when he was uppermost, with a knee on his chest.

Suddenly Daft Jem started; his quick ear had caught the sound of a horse's hoofs: it proved to be the patrol. Jerningham left Daft Jem to explain the circumstances and dispose of the victim as the officer might dictate; and amid more caresses from the poor youth he had saved, who hung round him and seemed

to love him like a dog, he departed, and hastened on to the Hall.

Entering the house silently by a small garden-gate, he had to pass through the entire range of the building to reach the library that constituted his apartment; but on the way he suddenly remembered the gallery where the family portraits hung, and bent his steps thither. During one of his visits there with Marie, she had commenced sketches of his father's and mother's likenesses; and they had been left there, to be finished on a future day. It was to seek these he came now. There they lay, just as Marie had thrown them carelessly from her, when she received his laughing summons to depart. He could see again the very gesture of light-hearted pleasure with which she rose to join him, and heard ringing through the halls of his memory the sweet soft voice that once had been his heart's most loved and dearest music. How happy they had been that day, chatting and joking in the sunlight! How merry had been the cottage that night, when they sat by the fireside together again! It will not bear reflection. There is something rising in his throat, there is something swelling in his bosom, there is something

moistening his eye, and such emotions must be suppressed. He rolls up the sketches, and thinks not of Marie the gentle and the true. He loves to arm his Pride with the thought that she abandoned him from interested motives, that her affected generosity was but a veil, and that a title could outweigh all the devotedness of her boy-lover! But he will keep the sketches notwithstanding, as relics of the past, as phantoms of the lost. He will not own to himself—what yet he can scarce suppress—that the being of whom they remind him most, whose hand had traced them, was still, alas! only too dear.

Declining the refreshment which the old housekeeper had entered to proffer, he cast himself on a couch in the library; and indulged, in darkness, his various and bitter reflections. While he lay there motionless and still, he was again startled by the same sound beneath the window that had attracted his curiosity on a former occasion. He rose silently, stole to the casement, and looked out. He could see nothing. He opened the window, and jumping from the terrace to the sward, gazed round again on every object near. All was still! A strange feeling, rather like su-

perstition, was creeping over him, when suddenly a twig cracked. He rushed to the terrace, tore the pendent ivy aside with his hand, and a female figure stood before him. Ere, however, he could speak, she stepped forth, and confronted him. He stood in the presence of Ayesha!

For an instant they surveyed each other by the pale light of the stars, that shed a dim ray on all around.

"We have met before!" said Jerningham, at last.

"We have!" returned Ayesha.

"And what brings you here now?" he continued.

"What think you? To rob?"

He made an impatient gesture.

"Yes!" she said, "we have met before. Nearly thirty years since I stood on this very spot when the *fêtes* that celebrated your christening made the village gay: you are the son of the murdered lord of the manor. You *should* be the squire of the domain of Jerningham!"

"I spoke of our having met before!" he replied.

"Not half-a-dozen winters since, when the

forest was leafless, and your companion of the trysting-place was Lord Haverdale!"

"Aye, *then!*" replied Jerningham; and he gazed upon her countenance, with a curious interest he could not conceal. "Strange being!" he added, "who are you? What mystery is it that shrouds your existence, and brings you ever and anon across my path?"

"As an evil omen?"

"No; but to awaken emotions that may turn your brain to fire!"

She started—but transiently. His words died away upon her ear, and left no trace.

"You would know my history?" she enquired, with something of *hauteur*. "There was a time when none would have dared seek to lay bare the inmost soul of Ayesha the Gipsy; but"—and her accent changed—"I am humbled now. The silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken. Some impulse that I cannot explain seems to hurry me on. I feel as if the revelation would give my aching bosom repose—so you shall know all, if the life of a fallen woman can yield you aught but disgust in the recital."

Opening a wicket, not far beyond where they stood, he led her into the library, lit the

lamp, secured the doors of the apartment; and she continued:

"I was born among the gipsy tribes of the highest Gitana blood that Spain can boast. From infancy I was destined to be a Queen. My youth was spent in England, however; and by numerous deaths in the clan, and by the possession of a rare beauty—which I may speak of *now*, since every trace of it is fled—my supremacy was early acknowledged. At fifteen, my word was law among a hundred of the wild and lawless. I was too proud to wed: I felt that some strange destiny was in store for me. On the day of your christening, I met among the guests Lord Haverdale; and my fate was sealed. An inexplicable attraction drew me ever in his path: *his* was the only eye before which my gaze had ever bowed. He sought me; we met again and again; and one night I fled with him."

She sank back in the *fauteuil* for a moment; but the anguish passed, and she resumed.

"After the household here was broken up by death, we went to France. How happy I was when the first flush of Parisian life beamed upon me! All the accomplishments he desired me to win, I acquired by instinct:

I endeavoured to make him pleased with me. I succeeded—nay, more: the praises lavished on my beauty and talent made him proud. At *that* time, I think he loved me! A new link came to increase his happiness—*my* hope. I had a daughter."

Jerningham trembled.

"A few short weeks after—and the sunshine vanished; clouds gathered over the horizon that has never known a brighter dawn. He appeared one day in mourning attire. 'A lady of rank,' he said, 'an old friend, had lost her husband'—Why prolong the tale? The widow was Madame de Méranie, estranged from her husband long before. She had loved Lord Haverdale for years in secret, and did not conceal her affection now the dividing barrier was removed. The result was soon apparent. What chance had *I*, the child of nature, with nothing to offer but my unvarying love, against the fascinations of a highborn woman of the world? He sought my society less and less daily. Now came the bitter penalty of my crime—remorse for guilt in some degree, but more of wounded pride. After following him one night in disguise, I resolved to take my child, and leave him. I

hastened home to the hotel. The child was gone—none knew whither! On the table was money, a letter promising me more — promising me anything to forget him, to leave him free!

"The insult turned all my love to gall. But my child! I hurried back to the hotel of Madame de Méranie, where I had seen him enter. I implored the servants, with my outstretched hands full of gold, to tell me the truth. They said that Lord Haverdale had left Paris. I asked for Madame. She was not visible—of course not. I knew then who was the companion of his flight. My love slighted, my child torn from me, I paused upon one of the bridges, and thought of suicide—the refuge of the unhappy. Then I turned away, and resolved on the solace of the injured—revenge!

"From that hour," said Ayesha, with a long sad sigh, "I have passed through such sorrow and travail as compress into instants of thought the desolation of a lifetime. But the passions have rioted in my bosom until the fire is extinguished. The hopes of this world have died away from me. I have well nigh done

with life. And now I go to France. For what, think you? For revenge? No!—to see HIM again; to look upon Lord Haverdale's face before I die. Then will I return, and drag my footsteps onward in search of my child, until I faint by the way, and find the only resting-place I can ever know—the grave!"

While she sank back exhausted, Jerningham paced the room with rapid and agitated strides. At last he said—

"Then if France beckons you hence, why are you here? Why were you here one night before, when I heard the sound of your presence, though your figure escaped me?"

"Dare I trust you with a secret?" she said. "Yes, I will. What is wealth to me now? I came for money!"

"Money!" exclaimed Jerningham, laughing almost hysterically. "Money! and to *me!*" He drew his purse from his pocket. "Look here!" he added, turning the contents into his hand. "Here is the worldly wealth of the 'should-be Squire of Jerningham'—three guineas and a crown! Come! we will share it!"

"You mock me!" was her reply.

"By the Lord that lives," he answered, "that is all."

"I know not why," she said, "but my heart yearns towards *you* with more kindness than I thought it could feel. You come of a brave old stock—good English gentlemen from sire to son for many a hundred years; and the last scion of the line shall not be scared by the want of a few guineas."

Jerningham stared at her tattered dress, at her aspect of decay, and tried to reconcile them with her words, but vainly.

"If I trust you," she said, "will you be secret?"

"I will!" he answered. She took his hand.

"You marvel at my being here," she explained, "and with reason; yet I was often here before, when the Hall was filled with guests. Your solitary ear has detected what every other has missed. No matter! Know, then, that below this very terrace is concealed a treasure."

Jerningham gazed vacantly at her.

"It was found by a chief of the clan long

ago, in an old ruin of a monastery. Hiding one night, he groped until he fell through some loose stones into a cave. When daylight broke, the treasure was before him. For safety it was conveyed here."

"Why here?"

"The spot beneath this terrace is sacred: your father buried a favourite dog here; a tablet was erected; the ivy was not allowed to be disturbed; here the casket was safe."

"Am I dreaming?" escaped from the listener's lips.

"Come and see!"

He followed her through the wicket-door, and she pointed out the spot. Upon raising the tablet, which was grey with weather and time, he saw a large iron chest of quaint manufacture, but massive and firm.

"Open it!" she added.

He obeyed, and upon his astonished gaze burst—not a blaze of golden light, but the dull gleam of a heap of coin of the most ancient date. Intermingled lay Spanish, Bohemian, French, and English pieces, of all epochs and of every value. Most of them had evidently been concealed about the time when

the abbeys and monasteries were despoiled to meet the expenses of a crusade, or the current necessities of the realm.

"The secret of the treasure transferred from chief to chief at last came down to *me!*" said Ayesha. "Henceforth it is yours as well as mine; use it as you will without compunction, *I* shall not need it long."

"Can I accept it?" murmured Jerningham in bewilderment.

"Why not?" she said; "it is mine, and I need it not."

"I will!" he said, and a new light dawned upon his brow: "I will! misfortune was heavy upon me, Ayesha, and I lost my spirit. I languished; but I will spur on once more; yet again I will try the tide of life. I will return to my tasks. I will be the Edward Jerningham of former days!"

"Now, then, I leave you," she said.

"Wherefore?"

"For France!"

"You will stay in England!" said Jerningham, suddenly assuming a graver tone.

She raised her dark, sad eyes, until they met his.

"Listen!" he said; "you have done me a

kindness that I never thought could have come so strangely; and yet, perhaps, it could have come in no other way. I will return it!"

"I seek nothing!" said Ayesha.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing but my child!" she added.

"Yet you go to France!"

"To see my lost lover, ere I die!"

"Again I say you will not go!" said Jerningham."

"What shall detain me?"

"The child you seek!" he said; "would you not stay for *that?*"

He took from his bosom the handkerchief procured by the agency of Daft Jem, and placed it in her hand. The moment her eye lighted on the coronet, she rose from her seat, and caught his arm convulsively.

"What was the name of your child?" he said.

"Marie!" she replied. "I taught her to lisp it in earliest infancy."

Jerningham trembled still more.

"I told you I would do you a kindness!" he said; "I will keep my word. I will restore your daughter!"

Ayesha clasped his arm with yet more con-

vulsive agony, and exclaimed, "Oh! do not trifle with me: do not deceive me. I have suffered so much!"

"Fear not!" said Jerningham; "you know not the tie that binds me!"

"I cannot believe it; it is a dream," she said, and she fell on her knees before him. "*Can* you have seen the being I have not gazed upon for an eternity of years!" She seemed to read truth in the features she scanned so earnestly. "Then where is she? what is she like?"

"She is beautiful, gifted, *noble!*" replied Jerningham, "beyond all that your imagination could have pictured!"

"And where?"

Jerningham moved aside. If he told her, she would spoil all. She would hurry to the *denouement.* What could keep back the mother from the bosom of her child?

"The chain is not complete!" he answered; "a link is yet wanting: to reveal it would be fatal. Trust to me! Rest here; be this apartment yours!"

"I will! I will!" she said humbly. "Oh!" and she clasped his knees again; "you will not deceive me?"

"Never!" he replied.

Her tears fell fast now, like summer rain; and she would not rise, but still hid her care-worn face.

"No!" murmured Jerningham inaudibly; "for to-night she has happiness enough: to tell her the truth would foil my plans. Now I have them all at my beck and bidding. The proud Lady Malcolm, who would know her parents; the prouder Lord Haverdale, who would know his child; the stern Ayesha, tamed down to obedience, subservient to a nod; and last, not least, money at command. Excellent, well. Squire of Jerningham Manor —*that should be!*"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE effects of the fit that had attacked Sir Edwin Malcolm passed away within a day or two of his seizure, and he resumed his accustomed existence. The loss of Dick Raven and the Madolini, neither of whom he ever saw afterwards, was replaced by the Bedford Buck and the Northumberland Nipper. With these worthies he made himself at home at the Grange, in spite of the frowns of the stone Abbess; in utter disregard of the wife who had nursed him so assiduously when he returned stricken from the sight of his false mistress. Marie had tried all her kindness, all her womanly tact, in the effort to detain him; but the atmosphere seemed too pure, the presence too lofty, and he wandered forth again.

The loss of a companion—even though a false one—leaves a gap in life. He had been

accustomed to lean upon Dick Raven's counsel in every emergency; he had honestly believed that the Madolini was all his own. To lose both, to lose them together, to stand alone, was torture to Sir Edwin. He feared his wife, and we can love nothing that we fear. Her eye, so unmoved, so placid, conveyed to his inward soul ten thousand reproaches that her words would never have winged there, no matter how soft their allurement on the one hand, how bitter their sting upon the other. He had been used to violent female rage, and would have laughed at it; but the calm spirit that never complained, the clear sense of right shining from those violet eyes, the pride of virtue that seemed to ignore vice even as if it were not existent—how could he meet these?

He had been at the Grange some time now, but he was not happy; nor was he in health. His disappointments, coupled with the attack of illness, had worked upon him sadly. He looked ten years older. His *youth* appeared suddenly to have left him. There was a peculiar flush upon his cheek, a feverish expression of care, an earnestness, an anxiety in his eye; he was not the light-hearted sportsman of the olden time. Nor dog, nor gun

could move him. He would wander listlessly through the cloisters, along the corridors, among the many apartments of the priestly Grange, and the very sense of solitude pleased him. As if nothing remained in the outer world worthy of belief. As if Marie were not there. As if nothing were real. But all a shadow that would pass away—a happiness that, when he sought to clasp it, would prove a dream. From this mood the transition to bitterness was not only easy but natural. It is the most fervent lover of life that, when deceived, becomes the direst misanthrope. Sir Edwin had enjoyed existence. He had entered into the business of pleasure, not as a cold, calculating debauchee, but as a lover of his species. The happiness of others was to him an infection, that he neither could nor sought to resist. The revulsion upon his mind had been a deadly one. His youth, with all its gay buoyant feelings, had passed away. He suddenly felt sad and old, and with the sentiment of age came all its sullen and morose resentments. Disguise it as we may, advancing years bring to the mind of man at least as much of dogmatic obstinate

pride, as of valuable experience; and some events make men's *minds* old very fast. The lover breaks his heart like a harp-string, in an instant. The sailor in peril of shipwreck finds his hair turned grey in a night.

Sir Edwin looked very worn indeed, and so Doctor Pip told him.

"Pupil of the eye dilated—sign of fever! Ah! yes! I see—tongue dry; heat in the larynx; too much excitement!" he said; or, "too much wine and smoking!" he thought.

To explain the presence of Doctor Pip at the Grange, we must take the reader for an instant elsewhere. Swivel and Canter stand at the door of the Club, and then and there converse.

"Have you seen Jerningham lately?" said Swivel.

"No—he's cleaned out, isn't he?"

"Cleaned out!" replied Canter. "I wish I was no worse. He came to the card-room last night. Campbell, Fawn, and Blunderstone at the same table. Fellows gathered round. Whispers about Jerningham! I think he saw it, for he pulled out his purse.

"'Guinea points, and ten on the rub!' said Fawn.

"'Double it, and I'll play!' said Jerningham.

"You should have seen Fawn stare! his Irish countenance lit up like a scooped-out turnip with a candle inside. When Ned saw this, he opened the purse, and drew forth a bundle of notes. He was sorry he had only seven hundred pounds *with him*. But if he lost more, there was another thousand in the desk at his lodgings, where he hoped Fawn and the rest would adjourn for cigars, and so forth. Luck was with the doubtful one; he went away with a cool three hundred, and seemed scarcely to care about picking up the money!"

At this moment a cabriolet, magnificently appointed, dashed up to the Club, and Jerningham nodded to them as he dropped the reins.

"Any letters?" he inquired of the porter. There were none.

"Any news?" he inquired of Swivel and Canter.

"Nothing!" said Swivel, "except Lady Malcolm's ball to-night. Are you going?"

"Don't know!" replied Jerningham carelessly; "by the way, Sir Edwin wants some

one to console him for the loss of the Madolini. You heard that Dick Raven was in prison for debt? Yes! Go down to the Grange, and lead the Baronet into a calmer state of mind: he is as dull as the twice-told tale!"

Jerningham passed into the Club to chat with one, to shake hands, *en passant*, with a few, to nod to everybody, and then disappeared again, with his horse's head towards the Park.

The next morning Swivel and Canter were whirling down in a dog-cart to the Grange. They arrived about two hours after mid-day, and found Sir Edwin breakfasting with the Bedford Buck and the Northumberland Nipper, upon steaks and beer, of which they partook enormously, while he ate nothing. He was delighted to see his Club friends, and it was not long before a more *recherché déjeúner* of *páté* and champagne was placed before them. The champions of the ring discreetly availed themselves of an opportunity to retire; and when their stalwart frames and tight corduroys had disappeared, Swivel and Canter began to rally Sir Edwin upon his retirement, and to condemn the conduct of Dick Raven. Their listener was just in that

morbid state of mind which made him ripe for any suggestion of an aggressive nature. His blood fired, his hatred rankled, he writhed inwardly, though for a long time all was smothered in outward calm.

"In fact," said Canter, "(what capital Sillery this is!) he ought to be called out, Blunderstone said it was 'too bad;' and Fawn swore, 'By Jasus! he'd have cut his throat, even if he'd disgraced the long line and immortal ancestry of the Fawns by being suspended by the neck.'"

"But he's been arrested," said Sir Edwin; "he's in prison, ain't he?"

"Out to-day, I hear!" answered Swivel; "family connections—that sort of thing got it paid: going with the Madolini to Italy."

"Going to Italy! going to leave the country!" exclaimed Sir Edwin; "I'll be —— if he shall!" and all his pent-up anger burst forth; "I'll blow his brains out first—call him out: damme, I'll shoot him! Swivel, call him out for me. Here," and he rang the bell violently, "prepare the carriage: put in the greys, they are the fastest. By God!" he said, as the footman disappeared, "I should

turn round in my grave if I hadn't a shot at that fellow! Go to town, and call him out."

There was a general feeling against Dick Raven for this last escapade. His obligations to Sir Edwin were well known; and the whole deception partook too much of shabbiness, and too little of wit, to have any shadow of redemption. They caught him just as he was leaving the club, with a three-cornered *billet-doux* in one hand, and his travelling cloak over the other. Dick Raven bit his lip, and turned pale as death, while their errand was explained; but he was too consummate a man of the world to falter. He treated it as if it were an invitation to dinner; and instead of driving to the steamer which would have borne him from England, he drove back to his lodgings with Swivel and Canter, and the details were soon arranged.

When they were gone, Dick Raven rose—he listened to hear the street-door shut behind them—and then he looked into the glass; he swept the hair from his forehead, where it had clung, congealed by the cold drops of dew called up by fear. He trembled in every limb: he grew faint; he sprinkled his face with

water from the dressing-table: some monitor within seemed to whisper that he was doomed —branded with ignominy, stained with the betrayal of a trust—to perish.

The meeting was to take place near the Grange itself.

"We had better have a surgeon with us," said Canter to Sir Edwin, after their return.

"Then send to Greenlawn for Doctor Pip," replied Malcolm.

"But how shall we explain?" asked Canter. "Will you tell him or not?"

"No!" answered Sir Edwin: "enough to say I am indisposed—no matter how; keep him all night; and in the morning he cannot escape."

Thus Doctor Pip was at the Grange, as unconscious of the part he was to play, as Mrs. Pip herself, who was at that very moment lying awake, expecting to hear his knock, and preparing the curtain-lecture that usually solemnized his entrance to the nuptial chamber, when the hour was later than ordinary.

The day had worn away; the Bedford Buck and the Northumberland Nipper, in an apartment set apart for themselves, were imbibing steady streams of gin and water; and Sir

Edwin and his three more distinguished guests were passing the claret, after a protracted dinner.

"You fire better than you did," said Canter to Sir Edwin.

"Yes," replied the Baronet, who was very *distrait.*

"Have you been shooting to-day?" asked Doctor Pip.

"No!" replied Canter.

"Oh! no!" added Swivel.

"Only a little pistol-practice in the Cloisters!" interrupted Sir Edwin, seeing that his friends faltered. "I took the old Abbess at twenty paces, and chipped her nose three times running. These are clever weapons!" and he took the case of arms from the side-table.

"I'm not a judge, myself!" said Doctor Pip, handling the hair-triggers with great caution, lest they should go off of themselves, though he was assured they were not loaded; "but I should think, if these were duelling-pistols, they would pick off a man to a button!"

"We shall see!" answered the host.

"Eh?" said Pip.

"I only meant to say we would try them

to-morrow morning: you are an early riser, Doctor; eh! ain't you?"

"I should think so!" said Pip, "or how would nine young olive-branches be provided with that nutrition, which, though necessary to the human frame, involves large bills to the butcher? how would seven thousand miles be walked or ridden for the parish, at fifty pounds per annum, and neither horse-flesh nor sticking-plaister allowed as extras?"

"I am still indisposed, Doctor!" said Sir Edwin suddenly, with a view to change the conversation; "you must not think of leaving me to-night. I have ordered your bed in the chamber next to mine, so that if I feel worse, I can call you. We will try the pistols early in the morning, remember. Swivel, see that Canter and Doctor Pip keep their glasses filled." He rang the bell. "Burford!" he added to the butler, "bring up another magnum, and replenish every twenty minutes!"

With this hospitable order, Sir Edwin excused himself and left the dining-room.

Doctor Pip thought the claret—not quite, but—almost as good as Jerningham's, and he patronized it liberally; but, without knowing why, he was not at ease, and as soon as an

adjournment to their sleeping apartments was proposed, he welcomed it as an acceptable escape. The room into which he was ushered was a long old-fashioned chamber, heavy with strange drapery, and solemn by reason of high-backed arm-chairs, and grim dull-looking glasses. A damp odour of not being inhabited pervaded the air, and the Doctor's ruddy countenance turned a shade paler, and he shivered. As the footman, however, in attendance lit the candles on the mantel-piece, and the lamp on the table, and stirred the sea-coal fire into a merry blaze, the room assumed a more cheery aspect, and the Doctor felt considerably relieved; when the servant had left him, he looked at the bed. It was a kind of state bed, with massive draperies and high posts, mounted with feathers, and to enter it evidently involved a run and a jump, so far was it lifted above the floor. They must have been taller baronets than Sir Edwin, who entered that bed with a stride, and slept in it in the old time. As the room lit up and the fire sparkled, the Doctor became more composed. On the table had been placed cigars and spirits, and he applied himself to these soothing preparations for sleep; instead, how-

ever, of becoming drowsy, he sat and smoked until the fumes of the claret, wherewith he had been so plentifully plied, seemed to pass away from his brain. Their place was supplied by an uneasy feeling of apprehension that he could not define. Why had he been asked there? Sir Edwin was well enough apparently, though he complained of indisposition. And then the pistols! but what could he do? What course could he adopt? He thought of seeking the rooms occupied by Swivel and Canter; but what could he say! He had no excuse for intruding: he could not even say that his light had gone out, for the fire was blazing like a furnace. While he pondered, the lattice, with its small loose panes, began to shake; and he drew aside the curtains, and looked out into the night. The evening had been dull, heavy, and still: the scene was changed now. The wind had risen in fitful gusts, and was mourning and howling round the Grange: dark clouds flew by, as if in headlong haste to join some dire conflict of the elements: the vanes on the turret-tops spun round with angry, fretful clamour: the tall trees sighed forth sorrowful complainings; and as he gazed, the storm began in a flash of

lightning that made the towers as bright as day, and caused the owls to wink in their ivy; then, like a discharge of artillery, came the crackling thunder. He drew back, and shut the lattice, and during the pause that followed, he heard a new sound: it was a long stifled groan, and it came from the next apartment, which he knew from the servant's indication was the chamber inhabited by Sir Edwin. Deeming that his patient might be suffering from an attack he had not anticipated, he took the lamp, quitted his own apartment, and opened the door of the next chamber. It was in every respect similar to that which he occupied himself. His first glance had fallen upon the bed, whence he expected that the groan would have issued: it was tenantless. But the window was open; and there, in his dressing-gown, with his hair floating wildly, with his throat bared to the tempest, as if all its fury was insufficient to cool his fever, stood Sir Edwin—no longer young and careless, with the boyish mien; but old, worn, and spectral, his colour fled, the phantom of his former self; and beside him, in strange mockery of his sadness—beside him moaned his favourite pointer Leda, whose instinct taught her that her master

did not well to be in such a scene on such a night.

The Doctor's entrance was unheeded by Sir Edwin, who seemed to have no eye but for the tempest.

"The storm to-night!" he exclaimed, "sign ever fatal to our house when enterprise is at hand. To-morrow the duel! No matter! Life is a weary load!"

He dashed the casement back, and fastened it; then he seized the lamp from his dressing-table, and as Doctor Pip drew back into shadow, he swept from the apartment, down the wide old creaking stair he strode, and the Doctor followed; through the deserted hall, along the echoing corridors—the lamp throwing wild weird shadows—until the cloisters were reached, and there he paused, and the Doctor watched from behind a distant pillar.

Sir Edwin sat down on a projecting buttress, beneath the sainted Abbess, and placing the lamp at his feet, he buried his face in his hands, leant his elbows on his knees, and sank into a motionless reverie. He was thinking then of his wife: it was in that very spot he had first proposed to make her Lady Malcolm. How golden had his dreams been

then! how changed since! yet he did her memory justice. He felt how pure had been her outward devotion—how she had sought to win him. It seemed so strange to him, now he thought of it, that he had not appreciated this before—that he could ever have left communion with so rich an intellect, to associate with a creature like the mercenary Madolini. He thought of her matchless beauty, of the admiration it had caused, of the atmosphere of adoration in which she had moved, and how she had passed through the ordeal with a reputation unscathed, a character one perfect chrysolite! He felt proud of her: he loved her more than ever: all his old feelings returned. Yes! On the morrow he would go to her; he would ask her forgiveness for the Past; he would lay out with her new plans for the Future. The old Grange—the crumbling heritage of his line—should be purified from its present dwellers. He would devote himself to his wife—to *her*, whom he had sworn to honour and protect; and in *her* calm purity he would find repose.

On the morrow he would do this! On the morrow!

He trembled.

Sir Edwin came of a rare old lineage. He could trace his ancestry up to grim stalwart chiefs, whose heels had spurred their chargers into the heat of many a bloody fray. Those chiefs had been well-nigh kings in their day, and their blood was not all dormant in their latest son. Like all his clan, Sir Edwin was physically brave. Had Dick Raven appeared before him then, he would have fastened on his throat like a wild-cat: had circumstances called him to the battle-field, he would have fought and perished loyally in the van.

And now he trembled; yet not from fear, but because, from some weakness of mind, arising from ill-health or from some vague superstition, he felt that he should not survive the conflict of the morrow, because HE alone, of all his race—of all his illustrious line—would leave no name behind. To die and make no sign! He thought then how willingly he would have redeemed it; how, if some struggle for a great cause—for liberty—for holy freedom—had been pending, how he would have thanked the benignant Providence that at least accorded him an honourable grave;

how gladly he would have folded his cloak over his wounds and died!

He started up, and *now* he was very pale and haggard, Doctor Pip observed.

Perhaps it was not yet too late. He *might* survive the meeting of the morrow, in spite of his superstitious forebodings. *Then* would he return to his wife, and tell her he was changed: *then* should his dreams of the Future make coming years a recompence for those gone by. The hereafter should be a landscape of gladness.

At that moment a roar of thunder echoed over his head; the cloisters shook with the reverberation, and the head of the grey old Abbess, after bowing once, twice, as if in mockery of the dreamer at her feet, fell upon the stone floor, and dissevered into a thousand splinters.

Sir Edwin started, and his paleness grew more ghoul-like in its pallor. He thought no more of Hope: he only thought of the errand which had brought him from his chamber. It was something of a pilgrimage, and he folded his hands over his bosom. He passed through the cloisters, and beyond, through an iron-grating, to a little chapel which had been

attached to the monastic building in former times. Of late years this had been the mausoleum of the race of Malcolm; and here, at the midnight hour, came Sir Edwin, the last of the line, to offer a prayer beside his mother's tomb. Mechanically and simultaneously he sank upon a crimson velvet chair before the tablet, and placed the lamp on a pedestal beside it. The marble, dimly illumined, recorded how Georgiana Lady Malcolm had departed this life in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ten, respected and loved by her friends and tenantry, and in the earnest hope of a joyful resurrection!

The words melted Sir Edwin, and he bowed his head.

Doctor Pip had read the inscription, too, and as he followed his patient back, through the cloisters—through the corridors—along the hall, even to the chamber-door that shut Sir Edwin from his view, he breathed silently, and with that hushed sentiment of repressed emotion that he had been accustomed to see and to feel in the chambers of the dead.

Returning to his own apartment, he found everything as he had left it—the lights yet burning, the fire still in a steady glow. His

emotions, however, were too exciting, and the scene he had witnessed was too strange to admit of his actually seeking his couch; so he sat in the large arm-chair before the embers, and dreamed away the night in wakeful repose. Towards morning he dozed: it seemed only for a few minutes; but when he woke it was broad day. His first impulse was to seek the chamber of Sir Edwin Malcolm. Apparently the baronet still slumbered; he was stretched upon the bed, with his face leaning upon his up-turned arm, like a schoolboy; but he was motionless. He looked into the face, and the features wore a beautiful seraphic smile—the contrast frightened Doctor Pip. He flung aside the coverlid. Sir Edwin was dead: must have been dead some hours before, in a second attack of his former fit.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Months have passed away.

Jerningham had appeared again in society, gay and *insouciant* as ever, and apparently supplied with money to indulge every caprice. Swivel and Canter could not understand the change. They made bets, as usual, that it would not last; but somehow it *did* last, and the odds changed hands. Lady Malcolm, of course, had long been invisible; but she had heard of the new cabriolet, the *vis-à-vis*, the servants in the Jerningham livery, the magnificent apartments overlooking the Green Park in Fashion's most crowded thoroughfare; and, like the rest, she wondered. It was with something like a blush that she thought of her pin-money, so scornfully rejected. A long season must elapse before she could appear again in society; and during that period of whirl and

bustle, Jerningham was the talk of the day. His work had been accidentally brought into notice again. His intellectual capacity gave him universal command; his powers of conversational amusement had grown richer and more mature; and the mental ore only proved purer and more profuse as the inner depths were worked by conflicting minds into the current coin of genius and wit—of eloquence and repartee. It seemed a kind of caprice engendered in his mind, to do everything unusual and *outré*. If there were a wild theory started in philosophy or art, he was the first to take it up: if a most astonishing phaeton, of strange and unexpected build, was conceived by some languid *flâneur*, he was the first to volunteer to drive it in the Park, when the crush was hottest; until these eccentricities went so far, that everything was forgiven if Jerningham did it, and genius and peculiarity —each mutually affecting to belong to the other—were linked for the time in singular companionship.

One day, he was stepping languidly from his cabriolet, when a carriage drove up to the same shop-door, in Pall-mall, where he had drawn up to inspect some antique bronzes. A

lady descended. She raised her veil, to speak a few words to the powdered footman in attendance; and in that one glance Jerningham saw Lady Malcolm. She was very pale, and arrayed in the deepest mourning. She did not see him; so, instead of entering the shop, he looked in at the window, and regarded her, as she sat amid the attentive assistants who crowded round to obey her commands.

She was very pale, but there was something more than that in the expression of her beautiful features. She had the air of one supported by her dignity and her pride, but supported with such a struggle as left no natural hue upon the cheek, no natural heat within the veins, but congealed all sense, all feeling, into marble.

Jerningham's heart melted within him. He knew that recollections no less bitter than his own could alone account for such an aspect. He felt that *her* thoughts, like *his*, were of the past; and, if small schemes of retaliation had ever possessed his mind, he repented of the unworthiness, and forbore. He determined to respect her, as he would have respected the memory of the dead, for she was dead to him. Why should he injure a creature so lovely, yet

so lonely, so sensitive to any kindness, no matter how trifling, in spite of the exalted rank that would seem to lift her beyond sympathy. He suddenly felt a revulsion of sentiment, and allowed no minor vanity to break the spell. He told Ayesha, who was still staying at the Hall, in his private apartment, that a week or two should realize all her hopes. Indirectly he gave Lady Malcolm to understand, that questions deeply affecting her own happiness had arisen, and she could learn their import by coming to the Hall on a day which it was yet left to appoint. And to Lord Haverdale, he wrote frankly, alluding with regret to the past, and promising him certain tidings of what he had sought most earnestly to know. As the peer had advanced in life, his interest in this particular subject had become more and more vehement and acute. The promptitude of his reply was only equalled by the energy of his actions. He was no sooner satisfied that Jerningham had grounds for the suppositions he advanced, than he made preparations to quit Montmorency, where he still lingered with the Prince de Condé, and to return to England for the purpose of making his final home in the old Hall. Of course Madame de

Méranie accompanied him. There was only ONE stern hand that could have severed a tie so binding as *that* which linked Lord Haverdale to the fascinating French woman: their affection was placed upon too solid bases; and that stern hand of chilling death shall not come yet for many a day.

The parting from the Prince was a painful one; for Haverdale and De Condé were of those haughty natures who scorn to dissemble an unpleasing thought, and something seemed to tell both of them that they should meet no more in this world. Haverdale had purposely avoided a studied "adieu," and hoped to escape without it. But the Prince would not part thus with a long known and cherished guest, and perhaps—if the truth must be told—his French nature, even in its extreme approximation to Life's utmost span, was still warmer, or at all events more demonstrative than that of the English aristocrat, to whom the display of any emotion was unknown. It had been arranged, the night before the separation, that they should meet at the breakfast-table on the morrow morn for the last time. To his surprise, Lord Haverdale was summoned by a message at an earlier hour than

had been agreed upon; and he found the Prince and Madame de Feuchères in his private apartment, in the presence of a notary. De Condé pressed his hand silently, and beckoned him to a seat.

"Old age is heavy on me," said the Prince, "and the flowers must be few and scattered that still bedeck the path of the worn-out Bourbon; but I wished you, Haverdale, to be witness to this, my *last* act of importance, because—."

"Because?" continued Haverdale, in the tone of interrogation, which had concluded the Prince's sentence; "is the act distasteful to you, Condé?"

The Prince's whole figure seemed to dilate with pride. His lip curled, his eye flashed, his mien was of command, his features lit with the olden fire of his race. Madame de Feuchères appeared to fear his rising mood. She stepped forward, and her small hand rested an instant upon his arm. There was no pressure, or apparently none: there was no change in her fair, false countenance, as the movement took place; but the touch was enough. How it curbed him on whose arm it fell—what scenes must have preceded, to make

that domination so complete, none can ever know. But the features subsided into calm; and the story remained, and must ever remain, untold.

"Haverdale!" replied the Prince, "twenty years divide us in point of age; but yet you can feel what I would now express. You have been rich, and accustomed to all that wealth brings its possessor. Do you know, I have always liked you for *that*—our feelings were kindred. Tell me, then, noble as you are, with all your coffers and your lands, would you not gladly exchange the terms of your being with one of my young *attachés*—two thousand francs a-year, a mistress in one room, and the ambition and the fever of a boy?"

"For the mistress, Prince; no!" answered Lord Haverdale. Madame de Méranie had her triumph then, if she had only been there to hear. "But for the sensation of one hour of youth, like you, honoured and dear De Condé, I would indeed give my rank and my domains, all the pleasure I have ever known, all the homage I may yet receive, all my wealth, and all my influence, my pride, my name, and my retainers, for *one* hour of Eton,

with its boat-races in the afternoon, the bad dinner in the evening, the subsequent slumber that knew no dream, the quarter's allowance spent before it was due, and the youthful spirit that made all these a happy illusion: give me these, and the power to change, and your Highness should see me a boy again!"

"And I would be with you. Nay, chafe not, *ma belle Sophie;* I would be by your side. If not to youth, I would recur to manhood; I would give my 'all' to look once more upon the features, to hear yet again the voice of the lost!"

Lord Haverdale knew too well to whom these words alluded; and he respected the sentiment too much to offend such holy recollection with a flippant reply.

Not so De Feuchères!

"The horses are already clattering in the court-yard," she said; "we detain his Lordship beyond the hour!"

The Prince de Condé sighed. "My will is prepared," he said at last; "my heritage, lands, all and every possession are here left to the family of my cousin of Orleans: they will not *wait long!*"

The serpent eyes glared.

"Will you attest the will?" said the Prince, leading Lord Haverdale to the notary.

Lord Haverdale did so, and as he put down the pen and turned away, he saw that Madame de Feuchères was flushed with triumph: but that the Prince, as though he had signed his own death-warrant, was pale and hueless as the inhabitant of a charnel.

"Adieu, Haverdale!" he said at last, after a long and painful pause: "adieu, *mon cher ami;* let me look at you earnestly, for I shall never see you again!" At this moment Madame de Méranie entered, and the good old man took *her* hand also in his. Another instant he gazed at them, strangely, apprehensively, wistfully, and then he added, "Adieu, my dear friends, *que le bon Dieu vous benisse!* I shall never see you more! God bless you both!"

They pressed his hands fervently. The Prince saluted Lord Haverdale on both cheeks, and kissed the white fingers of Madame de Méranie gallantly and affectionately, and they parted only to meet hereafter at the judgment-seat.

So Madame de Méranie and Lord Haverdale went to England.

It was a clear calm night of summer-time when the travelling carriage drove through the long shaded avenue to the portals of Jerningham Hall.

The suite of servants, drawn up in the hall in anticipation of their arrival, welcomed the new Squire with every demonstration of respect, and paid no less attention to Madame de Méranie. How strange were her emotions when she thought of the "goodlie companie" who filled that mansion with gaiety in former times; when she thought of her little snuffy husband; when the scenes that had filled up the interim rose before her; when she gazed upon the old portraits; when she thought how those mailed warriors, that had looked upon her unhappy youth, were now destined to glance—were now indeed peering curiously, upon a quarter of a century passed thereby, upon her happy meridian of existence.

Dinner had scarcely passed—Jerningham had appeared before, it must be mentioned—when the sound of flying wheels again shook the carriage-drive; Lady Malcolm descended at the gate, and entering, was ushered, as Jerningham had arranged, to an apartment set apart for a painful, but decisive interview.

Perhaps that apartment had never before seen so motley an assemblage within its walls. The old hall, lighted from turret to basement, had not been so gay for many a day. But now, in this small room, adjoining the library, stood Lord Haverdale and Jerningham, Madame de Méranie and Lady Malcolm, Daft Jem and Ayesha.

No sound escaped from those closed doors, from those sealed walls, to curious listeners, if such there were, that might betoken aught of the passing converse. But when many explanations had been revealed to breathless auditors, when the broken links were united, when, in fact, the story was told, a dead pause succeeded for some minutes; and the beings, so strangely met, were paralyzed too much to give vent to all the pent-up feelings that throbbed like Vesuvian lava in their bosoms. Just then, Jerningham, who had retired at last to avoid the scene, re-entered, and his presence broke the spell. In an instant Ayesha had fallen upon her knees before Lady Malcolm, and buried her face in the folds of her dress. She was not haughty now: no longer stern; but *so* sad, *so* gentle, *so* softened—her tears

belonged all to that sweet mood which yearneth to kindred affection, which loveth to forgive.

"And oh!" said the dark-browed Ayesha, "can it be—that YOU are my child; so bright, so beautiful. Can my prayers have been heard at last?"

"My mother!" sobbed Lady Malcolm; "my much-loved mother, *have* you prayed for me?"

"Aye!" replied Ayesha, "in many a twilight hour; through weary days, through chilling years, through shine and shower, *one* thought bore me up, *one* hope buoyed me onward—the thought, the hope, that I should see my child before I died!"

A short pause again, but very short.

"The thought, the hope, are realized!" said Ayesha, then; "but *one* brief embrace, my own, my loved Marie, and the hour is past, and with it my existence!"

"My mother!" exclaimed Lady Malcolm; "think you we can ever part?"

"Mr. Jerningham!" said Ayesha, and she extended her worn hand, "you will tell *all* to —Marie—to Lady Malcolm—hereafter, when I am gone. Oh! my child, think you that

the love which has sacrificed so much cannot sacrifice itself for the short space that yet remains?" and she clasped Lady Malcolm's hands; "think you I would stay here, to confound the rank you have achieved with the outcast origin of Ayesha the Gipsy?"

"Perish the thought you speak of!" exclaimed Lady Malcolm—or let us call her Marie, for it was under this name they had known, it was thus they loved her. "We will never part. My home henceforth shall be thine! Where should the mother's head be pillowed, but on the bosom of her child?"

And she raised Ayesha, until they lay linked on the same couch, in each other's arms; and the mother and child were one. Thy sorrows are over now, mistaken but injured Ayesha! thou hast sinned and suffered, and at last comes a foretaste of the better hereafter! Never more shall the seared features of that countenance be furrowed with another tear; never more shall the wrath of man disturb that chastened spirit which has found repose in purity and love!

Lord Haverdale stepped forward. Upon his pale features was a deeper pallor. The lamp-light, was it, or a conflict of many emo-

tions, that made so rigid the calm of the usual marble?

. He essayed to speak; but his eye fell upon Madame de Méranie, and he was silent. He essayed again, and would have failed once more; but the Frenchwoman rose, and took his arm. She had understood him. Louise de Méranie was too noble for jealousy. She led him to the couch; and, taking the hands of Lady Malcolm and Ayesha, she placed them in his.

"They were yours once; they are yours again. Bless them both. *I* do so."

He gazed an instant upon Madame de Méranie, as if to enquire if it were all real, and then sank between Ayesha and his child, and embraced them both

"Taught by *your* sublime devotedness, my intellect pierces the veil," said Lord Haverdale; "and the *smallness* of mortal pride dies away from me for ever! I see that the earth is fair; I feel that life is beautiful: but love and mutual kindness must be the flowers on the path, or splendour is but a dreary dream."

Here Daft Jem was so overcome, that he began to walk up and down the apartment

violently: all agitations found the same vent in the eccentric wanderer.

Lord Haverdale was the first to recover. He dropped into Daft Jem's hand a purse of no mean value, told him to consider himself in his service, and to wait without. When this was done, he approached Jerningham, and led his *protégé* to Lady Malcolm.

"To *you*," he said, "I owe my child. It has pleased God to rain happiness upon me. I will not be ungrateful. The Marie whom you once sought to wed proves to be that child. She is free; I give her to you!"

Jerningham remained immoveable.

"Thirty years since," continued Lord Haverdale, "these halls were your father's ancestral dwelling; they shall descend to *you!*"

Did Jerningham listen? He made no sign!

Lady Malcolm had fallen back with her face buried in her hands, waiting, while her frame quivered like an aspen, for a word.

"I asked your permission," said Jerningham at last, with faltering accents and quivering lip, "to wed—my former—my loved companion—Marie!"

"She is there!" replied Lord Haverdale.

"No!" said Jerningham, coldly, "it is not MARIE that I see before me!"

"Then whom?" asked Madame de Méranie."

"The Marie whom I sought to wed," said Jerningham; and his words found voice at last: "the creature I had found so young and guileless; the woman I had believed so innocent, and loved so long, passed away from me, I know not how. It was all a dream—it is not Marie, but Lady Malcolm, that I look upon!"

"Lady Malcolm!" said Lord Haverdale; and as he spoke she rose with dignity, and stood by her father's side—"Lady Malcolm, the admired and beautiful, need seek no love so coldly measured, so haughtily withheld, while rank and wealth are her willing daily suitors. "Speak, my child!" he added, turning to Lady Malcolm, "I know *now* your disinterested worth!"

"I have nothing to add," she answered, in accents carefully measured, lest they should fail ere her thoughts were uttered: "I did all for the best. If I loved, I believed; if I yielded, I knew no wrong: it was only when I

felt that my affection—and God knows how deep it was!—could injure the being on whom I had lavished it, that I turned away, and sacrificed my own heart to spare *his!* I cast my treasure into a pitiless sea, and the waves closed over it—for ever!"

For an instant Jerningham relented: his voice quivered; a strange choking sensation rose in his throat; he hesitated whether he should depart or throw himself at the feet of Marie, whom he still loved so wildly. But pride triumphed, and, bursting open the door, he hurried from the apartment.

Ayesha gave a long sad sigh, and Lady Malcolm sank for support upon the bosom of her father Lord Haverdale.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

SUMMER has glided away, and it is Autumn now—the season when the vine-leaf shows a tint of red, when the golden harvest is ready for the sickle, and the husbandman will soon be busy. The setting sun dies away in crimson o'er the landscape: the cuckoo wings his flight to other climes, like an epicurean lover of warmth and light, as he is: the fruits of the orchard have their ripest hue; the flowers their richest, because parting fragrance; the leaves their gayest garniture; the birds their sweetest and their final songs. In Autumn our story began: in the same season, so full of seriousness, so suggestive of sad reflection, it now must close.

On this Autumn eve we will visit once more the old familiar friends, and gaze upon them, and converse with them for the last time.

How full of mournful agony is that thought—*"for the last time!"* Who is there on earth, arrived at manhood's estate, unconscious of *that* pang? The mother has seen her child depart for a more genial but distant clime, and looking at the ravage of disease, which made that parting needful, has gazed broken-hearted on the features for the last time. The girl has seen her lover go to battle; the youth healthful and vigorous has sought a happier fortune on a foreign strand; the million voyagers over life's stormy deep meet only to part hourly, for the last time. How many lovely faces have we met, and never seen after! How many glorious scenes of Nature's bewitching beauty have we gazed upon, in admiration due to their splendour, but yet with a pensive sadness, because as the eye turned away, or the shades of evening shrouded them, the heart felt that it was for the last time! And now, as we essay to trace these final lines, the same feeling mars them. But it must be overcome; and so, in our panoramic review of the friends we are about to quit for ever, we will begin with Doctor Pip.

He is in the vestry. Parson Fribble, very lank and lean, is there too. So are most of

the influential habitants of the parish of Greenlawn. Fribble proposes that all the market-gardeners shall be called upon to abstain from malt liquor. Doctor Pip objects on *principle* —always "on principle"! He declares that the wear and tear of the human system caused by exposure to the open air all day and in all weathers, is so exhausting that artificial stimulus is indispensable. (The farmers were there, and Doctor Pip knew his audience.) What does the Reverend Fribble propose? Possibly port-wine rendered pure by age would be the most genial form that could be applied. Was his respected and reverend pastor prepared—since the parish funds were disposed of —to supply three hundred and fifty-seven market-gardeners daily with two glasses of port-wine each from his own cellar? If so, five dozen a-day of wine in a dry crusted condition, warranted seven years in bottle, and with no doubt about the beeswing, would just suffice to keep the stomach of the market-gardening population in tone; and he, Doctor Pip, would delight to dispense that charity from their revered pastor, and would be happy to see the malt-liquor question passed without a division. Pip was the man for the farmers.

But Parson Fribble explained, and the gardeners had their beer, and now the meekly arrogant incumbent advances to Pip with the air of an enemy conscious of being worsted, and desirous of a truce. He takes Pip by the hand; he assures him in his pulpit whine that their views, though apparently different, are in reality precisely the same, which Pip doesn't see; and then, with a bold dash and a gulp, as if he were swallowing one of the Doctor's pills, he hopes that Pip and Mrs. Pip will dine with him the following night to meet a few Christian friends. Tea and sandwiches would have had no effect; but *dinner* is irresistible. The Rubicon is passed. Doctor Pip yields and triumphs.

And now for an instant to France, whither imagination can transport us as swiftly as to the next chamber. The Revolution of 1830 had passed; the schemer had reached the pinnacle he sought; he reigned—a rule begun in fraud, to proceed in tyranny and end in shame. The Prince de Condé, a victim! They find him dead. They dare to say that his own hand has done the deed. Can they face the ordeal?

Upon a lofty *catafalc*, in a *chapelle ardente*,

are exposed the mortal remains of the Prince de Condé. The holy walls are hung with ebon drapery, music's sad swell floats through the heavy air, the voices of ministering priests are lifted in earnest prayer to *Him* alone who is able to redeem. A few short months before, and the Prince mourned thus—mourned *there;* but who mourns him? His faithful domestics, a few fond friends. Yes! But Orleans—now King—whom his bounty had made so rich; mourns he? The false mistress; has *she* the courage to look upon her murdered lover? See! his wounds burst out afresh, and crimson blood incarnadines the sight—the presence of the loathsome, the treacherous Sophia de Feuchères! Torn by the remorse of a guilty conscience, the wealth she inherited from her victim brought her no happiness in this world, not even peace; and when she died, her husband refused the ill-gotten legacy that was stamped with the crime of Cain.*

* A la mort de Madame de Feuchères son mari refusa l'immense fortune que lui laissait sa femme, en disant "Ce sont des richesses trop mal acquises, elles sont indignes de moi!"—*Revelations Politiques.*

Of course, in the train of Lord Haverdale, Mr. Lorrie Stocks returned to England. He was very well-to-do, was Lorrie; and Ayesha could have told, if she liked, how many a stray guinea had come from *her*, for information he had no business to give—when her schemes were wildest—about the movements of his master; a betrayal of trust, indeed, that had more than once well nigh cost Lord Haverdale his life; but the secret was kept. Lorrie had thoughts of retiring from servitude now, and taking a tavern, wherein some lady of substance, made happy by the bestowal of his hand, was to preside at the bar. He used to talk it over a good deal with the pretty young wife of Hiccup, when he went of an evening to take his pipe at the Crooked Billet. When he arrived there one day he found Hiccup, grown very decrepid since his marriage, sitting on the seat in the porch, gasping for utterance. He seemed to fancy he was talking to Lord Haverdale; for all they could get out of him was, "Best hotel in the place, my Lord—good accommodation for horse and man—ordinary at two o'clock, and neat wines:" and with a long fond look at the sign above his head, his chin fell, and the

pretty young Mistress Hiccup was a widow. Lorrie did not propose to her on the spot; but she looked so much prettier than ever in her weeds that he married her three months afterwards, and became the landlord of the Crooked Billet, in which capacity he has, strange to say, avoided as yet drinking himself to death.

Dick Raven went to Italy with the Madolini, who left him, when he was quite cleaned out, for a Russian Prince. This frosty potentate is liberal, and his opera-box accordingly is favoured now with the glances that were once so much prized, and so dearly paid for, by Sir Edwin Malcolm. By the aid of twenty pounds, borrowed jointly from the inseparable Swivel and Canter, whom he met at Rome, Dick Raven contrived to get as far homeward as Boulogne; there he stayed, started a bushy beard, was discovered cheating young Lord Simper at cards; and having demanded a meeting, was shot through the heart by that noble youth, who had scarcely ever seen a pistol before, who fired at random with his eyes shut, but who on the strength of this feat became the lion of the season.

Daft Jem has been tamed down by degrees into something like civilized propensities; but

still at intervals he starts off again upon his eternal wanderings, and when Jerningham remonstrates, and makes him promise not to escape again, he says, as of old, "I'll do it for *you*, 'cos you're kind to me, and I ain't used to kindness; no! I ain't used to *that!*" But he forgets, and starts off just the same, and so he will, it is to be supposed, until the end of his days.

When the first transports of joy, and even delirium, began to settle into a mellower tone of tranquil happiness, Ayesha's mind became deeply imbued with the spirit of religion. At first she seemed disposed to enter some holy Sisterhood; but afterwards the simpler and purer doctrines of the English Church attracted her more. And so, though declining health enfeebles her, she passes her days in unobtrusive charity, her nights in heartfelt devotion. When she visits the poor, there is always a lady supporting her arm, who is very beautiful, but whose loveliness is of marble, and who rarely smiles: it is her daughter, Lady Malcolm. Their mutual affection is so strong and so strange that they cannot bear to be separated for a single hour; their rides and walks are ever together; their couches are in

the same chamber, their orisons at the same altar; their minds and hearts are one. They have lost so much of the past, that they feel as if a whole lifetime could scarcely recompense them.

Jerningham and Revel have gone to the cottage by the river-side again, and live there together. The parties there, when it is not theatre-night, if not very *récherché*, are wonderfully sought after by the gay and titled; but as the ballet is strongly in the ascendant among the female guests, we will pass gently over this portion of our narrative. Michael Brent appeared one day. The conclusion of the Revolution of 1830 had brought him back to England; and he had no sooner arrived than he stumbled by accident over his former master, Ward, who was now covered with insignia of every kind of rank and honour that the Duc de Lucca and other employers could bestow. He had given Michael Brent a permanent and lucrative employment; and the whilome literary hack came to bid them good-bye. They had scarcely exchanged the parting congratulation, when strangely enough—for curious coincidences never come alone—a message arrived to say that Mr. Greville, who

was staying at the Hall with Lord Haverdale, had been taken suddenly ill, and wished to see Jerningham.

The autumn day was waning into afternoon when he entered the chamber, and greeted the old friend of his family, whom he found sadly altered. If the truth must be told, poor Greville had been sorely pressed of late; and his presence at the Hall now was less of a visit than a refuge. He took Jerningham's hand the moment he entered, and would not be persuaded to release it for a second.

"Do not be alarmed, Edward!" he said, "mine will scarcely be a death-bed! It is only a lamp burning out—a machine that is broken when its work is done!"

The calm on that expansive intellectual forehead was very sublime: the cheeks would have been hollow, but there was a slight flush upon them; and upon those arched lips, whose accents had filled many a lordly hall with laughter and enthusiasm, now played a pleasant child-like smile, that made dissolution seem only like a happy dream.

Jerningham's presence revived him for a space. He contrived to sit up, supported by the pillow, and converse.

"You were smiling," said Jerningham.

"At the world's folly," he replied. "Do you remember the Baroness Flamingo?"

"And the novels in the *Court Echo!* ah! yes!" said Jerningham, and he smiled, too.

"You know how kind she was to Orleans, when he was as penniless as—as—I am now?"

Jerningham assented with a nod.

"She thought when he became King he would repay it, and she presented herself at Court. She was refused with ignominy; and when she returned home, she poisoned herself!"

"Why do you speak of this now?" asked Jerningham.

"The Somnambule's Prophecy is fulfilled strangely enough!" was the reply. "The Baroness dies in a foreign capital by her own hand; and here am *I* dying, penniless, though I dare say some of the noble and wealthy—who would not have lent me a hundred pounds—will attend my funeral, to see their names in the *Morning Post*."

These last words were not uttered angrily, but in the most playful tone of one removed from the strife of existence, and insensible to its resentments.

"There is a Plato on the table," added Greville, suddenly, changing the current of his ideas; "I found it in the library, and knew not that it would be almost my last consolation. Turn to the Phædo; read me the last scene, the death of Socrates."

And Jerningham read from the sublime exhortation addressed to Simmias, that we should use every endeavour to acquire virtue, where the reward was so noble, the hope so great, to where Socrates returned from bathing, and the hemlock was drunk, and he sat down, and did not speak much afterwards. And so on to the final scene.

"Philosophy stopped there," said Greville, musingly; "it could go no farther. It was sublime as unaided truth *could* be; but" (and he pointed to another book on the table beside his couch—it was the Bible) "*there* is the philosophy to die in. Read me the death of Jesus Christ."

The sun was setting in a crimson glare, and its light coloured into various rays of prismatic beauty was playing upon the walls of Greville's chamber. There was a sweet calm over the apartment while Jerningham's accents floated through the silence, telling the solemn, the

mysterious narrative of Holy Writ. Greville's countenance grew more resigned, more placid as he concluded; and the last words seemed not like a death-knell, but as a summons to a loftier state; not as a sentence, but as a hope. He was beginning to sink back upon the pillows, as if in slumber, when the sound of a new arrival reached his ear from the court-yard. It seemed to revive some dormant recollection. He motioned to the servant in attendance, and for a moment they were alone, gazing together silently upon the golden colours of sunset that flooded the walls. Jerningham gazed through the lattice. Another quarter of an hour, and the orb would have declined. He thought how the ebbing spirit would part with it to the Unknown!

The chamber-door opened, and Lord Haverdale entered—a figure in mourning upon his arm. Jerningham dared not raise his eyes. He felt involuntarily that it was Lady Malcolm.

Greville rose, with a dying effort. His voice was very hollow now; but the sweet olden smile was on his face, and that peculiarly angelic expression which heralds the last sleep. He took Jerningham's hand, and then Lady Malcolm's.

"I stood by your mother's couch, my boy," he said at last, "when she was dying." He spoke more quickly every instant. "She bade me watch over you—and I have done so—and loved you—ever. Death humbles the best and wisest: let it humble *us*, who are neither!" Somehow, he had drawn their hands together; and the fingers of Lady Malcolm and Jerningham were linked trembling in one. "I obey her behest *now*," he said—"the behest of your sainted mother, Edward, whom we all loved so much. I *could* tell you of all the deep devotion felt for you in less prosperous times—I could tell you of the sacrifices that you never knew, or passed unheeded. I *could* tell you how you have been loved! But need I? Your dear mother told me to make you happy: I do so now. *Here* is your happiness! *here* is your loved, your loving Marie! It is pride that has kept you asunder. Pride in the presence of the dying! Look at ME! think of the death-bed! Where is pride THEN?"

Jerningham raised his eyes to Lady Malcolm's countenance, and saw the confirmation of Greville's words. The pale beauty was flushed; but so earnest, so noble, so evidently unexpectant of the scene to which she had

been hurried—and then, moreover, so full of suppressed but fervent affection — that, insensibly, his grasp tightened upon her fingers. He drew her light form towards him; he pressed his lips, in rapture, upon her large, matchless, violet eyes: and all Jerningham's misgivings about her love, and Marie's sorrow about his irregular career, vanished in an instant; and, in one long, exquisite embrace, all the past came back upon them. They were the children again, who walked hand-in-hand together in the olden time.

Greville had seen that his wishes were accomplished; for though, when they turned to look on him, he had passed the death-pang, the angelic smile was upon his countenance still. He had died content.

Jerningham and Marie were united at the altar not many months thereafter; and oh, how much more happy were they *then* than amid the fever of their early acquaintance! They *now* dared to look upon the future. Their love could not be more vehement than heretofore, but it was more confident; it knew no confine but death, and could even look beyond it. Each was to the other all in all.

Ayesha has always lived with them, and

lives only to do good. The rich respect her; the poor bless her. If any hardship is to be undergone, it is Ayesha who undertakes it, in spite of her fading health. She appears to think that her expiation can never be complete. Her existence is benevolence.

And now, Marie is the bride of her early lover; now, Jerningham has been made the heir to the estates of his ancestors; now, Ayesha is happy.

And Lord Haverdale and Madame de Méranie, side by side, as they have been in the friendship of many a year, are gazing with gladness upon the newly-married lovers, while they wander through the domains—are watching the earnest glances of Edward Jerningham, as he looks down at Marie, and drinks in deathless affection from the full, clear depths of those violet eyes.

THE END.

NOTE: SOMNAMBULE'S PROPHECY.

Soon after this chapter was written, some instances were recorded in the French papers of criminals detected by the aid of magnetism.

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